

FULL MOON AT MIRANSHAH

Searching history unarmed in North Waziristan, May – December 2012

Introduction

It was in April 2012 that I received a call from my old friend Colonel Khalid Shahbaz , his calls are not unexpected because for last over two decades I am receiving his calls almost daily, nothing official just discussing cricket and sports. For a change he informed me that one of his regiment officer is commanding Tochi Scouts in North Waziristan Agency and is looking for someone to write the history of his corps; am I willing?. Without giving any second thought I agreed.. I had never landed in Miranshah or for that matter in North Waziristan Agency in my 25 years of military career, had flown over it couple of times. Read about it, fascinated and dreamed of travelling through it. In 1996 bought a Russian jeep and a Kalashnikov for the purpose, one landed me in trouble with my wife and another with my commanding officer. Thus when I was offered a chance to write the history of Tochi Scouts I was thrilled. I had met Commandant Colonel Wajahat Hamdani only once before for short duration, he is unit officer of my course mate and dear friend Colonel Khalid Shahbaz, who for once did talk about something productive other than cricket in these twenty fivers of friendship; in putting me through or rather us together for this venture.

I contacted Wajahat to get an idea how to reach Miranshah there was no safe way to reach. No bus, train or private car. When I was a subaltern then a Hiace wagon had regular service between Sargodha and Miranshah but now time has elapsed and there was no way other than to reach Bannu where Tochi Scouts had a rear headquarters or Serai. From Bannu there is a regular traffic plying to and fro Miranshah and even beyond but for military there is a convoy which moves only once a week amidst curfew. I was bent upon adventure yet I never even for once contemplated going in a civilian transport; such is the terror. Amidst this procrastination I arrived in Rawalpindi on 5th May 2012 and next day I had an offer from another old friend Colonel Sardar Sajjad to drive with him to Peshawar; I agreed. We reached Peshawar at 2300 hours on 6th May with a plan to catch an army aviation helicopter flying to Miranshah. Unknown to both of us a far reaching event had taken place there on the same day. I stayed for next six months at MiranShah and this is what this book is all about.

I travelled around with Scouts to Razmak, Boya, GhulamKhan, Bangidar, Massuzai to name few otherwise I went deep into archives, observed the scouts, felt the war going on , when almost daily there was a duel of fire between the Scouts and Taliban. The ever present noise of Drone flying overhead keeps reminding of the time when all around it seems to be beginning of Bronze Era. I wrote two accounts, one official and other unofficial ; I have infused both because one is only one side of picture. It reflects the history of North Waziristan itself and more pertinent to present day observers of international affairs, history and political science and all these invariably revolves around military

system. What about individual and personal feelings going on and around the insurgency and terrorism. How does group behaves, how they celebrate events and so on.

North Waziristan Agency

North Waziristan Agency (NWA) have an area of 4,707 square kilometers with a population of 3, 61,246 (1998 census) thus an annual growth rate of 2.46%. There were 192,432 males and 168,814 females in the agency, literacy rate being 13% among males and 0.5% among females. Population density was 77 persons per square kilometers only South Waziristan Agency had a lower density rate then NWA among the seven agencies (SWA have an area of 6,620 square kilometers with a population of 429,841).¹ The Uthmanzai Wazir still formed 59% of population, Daur 39% with Mahsud forming the remainder. There were 73000 Afghan refugees still living in the agency. Ibrahim Khel, Wali Khel and Mamit Khel were the three major Wazir Tribes with sub clans which included Madda Khel, Manzar Khel, Tori Khel and Macha Khel of Ibrahim clan, Bakka Khel, Jani Khel, and Kabul Khel being part of Wali Khel clan, Hassan Khel, Khaddar Khel, Bora Khel and Wuzzi Khel were integral part of Mamit Khel; all in all there are 42 sub clans of Uthmanzai Wazir in NWA.

Daur tribe composed of four main clans namely Dangar Khel Sayyids, Ozhi Khel Sayyids, Malizad and Tappizad. The last two are most populous and important. Malizad alone has 67 subclans. There was not much of change in the areas of their occupation, they were living between Tanghrai Tangi near Tal on Tochi to halfway between Boya and Datta Khel; on the lower end of Tochi Valley they are known as Lower Daur and occupy the area from Shinkai Defile to Tanghrai Tangi. In upper Daur area (Malizad) their main clans are at Degan, Malakh, Boya, Hamzoni, Darpa Khel and at MiranShah where as in lower Daur they are at Idak, Tappi, Khaddi, Hurmaz, Mausaki, Hassu Khel and Haider Khel. Major difference between the Daur and Wazir remain in the fact that Daur do not migrate.

7th May 2012, Day One. Miranshah.1530 hours local.

I arrived at Miranshah from Peshawar in a Mi-17 helicopter courtesy Colonel Sardar Sajjad, luckily the General Officer Commanding {GOC} Major General Ali Abbas who is commanding the deployed 7 Division happens to be my course mate and a good friend thus I was able to get the picture of the area from horse's mouth. Unfortunately after almost a month of peace today the rebels struck hard at the army convoy killing over dozen and wounding another forty apart from taking away few prisoners majority of the soldiers are from 36 Baloch and few from 20 Baloch regiments. Ali put me wise on the subject as to why a handful of bandits have been able to resist the onslaught of a regular infantry division, neither Ali will admit it and nor will any other army officer that these rebels have attained a notion of victory.

Ali Abbas 's view point is that he does not have enough force, his troops are deployed but Ali as he is candidly admitted that so far the army has been beaten in learning the ropes of the trick in frontier warfare. *'when I was commanding a brigade in the south Waziristan my first challenge in 2007 was to convince the troops that the war we are fighting is legitimate ... I would address the*

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103 Infantry Brigade analysis of the FATA, 2011.

troops durbar and urge them to speak out their mind because only then I could give them the logics to change their heart, second task was to train them in fighting this unconventional warfare which it seems that they have still lot to learn'.

In the afternoon I had a walk in the mess and found a library although it is not that rich in terms of books yet it is in these far flung remote areas especially among Scouts libraries that one comes across some rich manuscripts and same was the case here. I also went to Museum and one has to appreciate the spirit because it is one of the best kept museum in Pakistan especially when one keeps in mind the environment, needless to say the female mannequins wearing local dress depicting the cultural heritage of the area are the only female sex symbols in the area and I have to admit that it does create sensations. The long walk on the main mall is mind refreshing the variety of roses planted here and all in their bloom is a treat for the eyes and soul and the traditional warning boards planted in the furrows warning the soldiers not to step on these rose buds have typical Scouts sense of humour embalmed in it.

Dinner in the mess all alone, the dining hall is square and big but not huge with Corps and national flags on front wall a piano in working condition two glass cupboards with mess silver and half a dozen heads of Urial and deer mounted on the dinning hall walls along with equal number of antique and not so antique weapons mainly machine guns forms part of dinning hall décor. Mess has innumerable rooms or at least it seems like this all having varying décor but weapons and silver remains the central theme. It is after a long time that one comes across a mess so rich in military décor. A scrap book presented in 1937 by two Scouts officers have wealth of old pictures my eyes caught the picture of an Auster aircraft at Miranshah strip in 1946 there is a letter of the pilot as well who visited the place in 1988 for nostalgic reasons.

2130 hours. Outside the thunder of clouds and that of explosives are intermingling, all day there has been constant firing between the Taliban's and the Tochi Scouts. The fort is strong and almost a whole wing is entrusted with its inner cordon protection yet the Taliban's kept on firing from the mud built houses that forms the Miranshah bazaar. A rocket exploded within the fort area while I was having a cup of tea with the quartermaster in his office but it seems routine affair, soon he told me after listening to the telephone call that Sepoy Sahibzad Bhattani has died in this explosion and then in the same tone in which he ordered cigarettes for me he also called the subedar of Bhattani Qaum. I was just wondering whether I should walk back to the mess amidst this fire or just keep on sitting in this office. Thought of Lawrence and was convinced that he must have got the same reception in 1921.

Another whistling sound of a rocket and a counter fire from the scouts but life within the mess is as normal as one can imagine. When I came from the strip on a jeep in this fort I heard the noise of gun fire and thought that scouts are carrying out range practice but my driver corrected me by stating it is actual fire. I have no hesitation in admitting that in my whole twenty years of military service I have not seen so much hostile fire which I encountered today and it is still going on. At night I had the nightmare of hallucinating a Waziri entering my suite armed with a dagger,

8th May 2012, Day two.

A peaceful morning so far only the chirping of the birds, I had a joint so as to concentrate on the task. The room reminds me of many episodes which must have taken here in the past. Waiting for bed tea.

I had a conversation with the commandant on the layout and general contents of the book. Later I met Lt Col Tariq and gathered some interesting data for instance he highlighted that majority of the soldiers are without any child and this struck him as strange, later on when he interviewed the soldiers he inquired them on this and it was the first time that any one has talked to them on this issue, another reason which is given for this lack of children among the scouts is attributed to the fact that most of them are not even aware of how to perform sex and they preferred anal sex with their wives, it seems strange but it is authentic and narrated by a lady doctor who inspected the wife of one of the soldier. Another thing which was discussed by Tariq was the level of hospitality among the troops. One of the wing havildar major which is a coveted appointment after six months requested him for relinquishment, it was revealed that the WHM was spending a considerable amount of money on hospitality of troops who were coming or going to the posts apart from share in farewell gifts for his colleagues, Tariq as a solutions started giving a fixed amount to all the appointments for entertainment but it was cordially turned down.

I met the Corps Subedar Major Zulfiqar at his office a good natured person with a typical scout sense of humour which becomes obvious after few minutes of observation. He showed me a bullet cartridge which was collected from the post in yesterday firing, it was fired from the Cobra and SM was furious over this he also resented the fact that yesterday not a single rocket was fired by the Cobras. He updated me on the yesterday's episode and said that he was stopped from retaliating against the Taliban's by the senior officer for the fear of collateral damage, ' sahib we also have wife and children and if these bastards are going to show no respect for them why should we do so... I ordered the troops yesterday to fire on the mosque as well as the Taliban's were using it as a strong point'. I talked about the footwear of Scouts after having a look at his brown chappal; he very proudly told me that this chappal is made in his native hometown of Parachinar.

The uniform of Scouts is under transition from militia kameez shalwar to trouser and shirt along with shoes almost every one whom I have met is not happy with this change. Colonel Wajahat highlighted that kameez shalwar is something which is acceptable to the locals and the whole spirit of Scouts revolved around wearing native dress and with this change the Scouts are bound to loose their face among the natives after all the western dress is a symbol of oppression to the natives. I also had a look at the brown belt of the uniform but found it below expectation in terms of quality of leather. Tochi Scouts have six wings and each wing has its own colour for instance No. 4 Wing has pink colour flag. Havildar Shah Wazir became my guide and took me for a walk in the fort; we started with the nearest wall behind the offices and the check post, Mian told me and also showed the spot where rockets landed yesterday, one had exploded as it hits the tree trunk and other when it hit the wall. I saw Miranshah from the wedge of the post a scene typical of frontier almost a dozen trucks were standing parked and there was no movement at all, along the road are few double storeyed houses which also act as kind of hotels and my guide told me that fire normally comes from these high buildings although few have been demolished. The fear of unknown that the bullet may come from any direction at any time is quite sensational. Scouts have raised the banks of the road so as to create a kind of obstruction for the snipers. I also had a look at the observation post and the wall graffiti, there was no mention of sweet hearts as is common in Siachen posts neither any poetry of romance rather few advisory and morality related issues were chalked like stealing is bad.

Next we walked towards the clerks office area where recruitment of sweepers was under process, I am not sure but I will check up tomorrow as to from where all these Christians have come for recruitment in Scouts. Four 25 pounder guns were locked in four rooms, saw soldiers living barracks, a long barrack with tubular cots placed next to wall, black steel trunks with names written in bold white cooking utensils as in regular army. Soldiers do tend to have the passion of cooking food

themselves partially by adding something spicy to already cooked food. Chakoor is a favourite pet of soldiers especially of Scouts I noticed no less than four cages having the bird inside. Canteen was our next stop it is not very rich but has almost everything less than weapons and hashish for sale. Later we both walked outside the fort towards the soldiers family area where kids were playing with football, a college almost complete was also my focus of attention but my guide told me that it has not started teaching.

In the evening I had tea with commandant at his residence and came to know that this was old Air Force Mess of RPAF but what was more amazing was the fact that almost fifty civilians daily come for work from Miranshah. Weather was again becoming cloudy, Colonel Wajahat narrated that he came in last July and there were rain during the entire month of August last year.

This place is strange because there is a war going on yet life is as normal as it can be there is tennis in the evening. Load shedding is there but Scouts have their own generators as well.

On a map of having scale one to a million the easting's from 66 degrees onwards on observes brown colour as predominant the northing's corresponding to it that is 32 degrees northwards up till 34 degree the terrain is barren and void of any major water reservoirs two water reservoirs namely Ab e Istada & Dasht Nawar are eye catching because of blue colour, major towns are Ghazna, Gardez & Matun even Kabul is enclosed in the area. The Durand Line which is mark in red, the eastern side of it is has more green colour and finally the Indus is major blue colour showing the water life line thus it is natural to assume that all the population was drawn magnetically towards the Indus. Durand line does not follow any natural riparian division rather it follows the crest line of the mountains and that too not in a straight line but over the passes that allows the movement from east towards the Indus.

Area between the Kurram River or the Peiwar Kotal Pass down south till Gomal Pass or Gomal River is the country of Waziris, it is in terms of historical contest , in terms of administrative boundary the area is divided into valleys thus Valley adjacent to Peiwar Kotal is termed as Kurram Valley and inhabited by tribes other than the Waziris.

The over all topography of the area is pleasant and seems lively when compared to the Baluchistan and extreme northern Hindukush. The rivers are the source of life but they seems to have dried out in the era of Aryan migration and one cannot rule out that the major reason and cause of migration was this dearth of water. For last five hundred years these river beds occasionally comes to life due to heavy snow fall or rain which causes the small innumerable riverine and streams to gush down the mountains and joins the major rivers thus the population is based around these beds of fertile land ,over all the area is rocky but not menacing in nature. Mountains are high yet none is higher than 12000 feet. The layout of ground between Tochi River and Gomal is most pleasant with green pastures and lively valleys dotted with fruit trees and wildlife however the area over all cannot sustain the inhabitants purely on its own produce. The major crop is maize and wheat , rice is not produced in the area. Fruits are in abundance especially the apples, grapes, walnut, pomegranate and watermelon. Weather is tolerable both in winter and summer however the cold weather does force temporary migration of nomadic peoples known as powindahs who at the start of winter season migrates from the highland west of Durand Line towards the Indus Valley and then return to their lands in summer.

Tribes of Tochi Scouts

Afridi.

There are ten platoons of Afridis, they have eight sub clans. Namely Koki Khel, Adam Khel, Aka Khel, Qambar Khel, Malik Din Khel, Qamar Khel, Zakha Khel and Sipahya. Out of these, seven clans live in Khyber Agency less Adam Khel. Subedar Muhammad Hayat Adam Khel Afridi is the Qaum Commander since April 2012.

Bangash.

Six platoons they are mixed in terms of Shia and Sunni faith adherent. Kohat, Hangu is their abode. They all belong to settled areas. Subedar Major Ryat Khan Sur Gul Bangash is the Qaum Commander.

Bhittani.

Eight platoons, they were inducted in 2003. Initially two platoons were inducted in No.5 wing later one more platoon was inducted then two more in same wing and lately another two have been inducted in No.6 Wing. Bhittanis inhabit the area of Lakki and Tank (Dera Ismail Khan).

Khattak.

Thirteen platoons, they inhabit Karak, Kohat and surrounding areas. Bhangi Khel, Senni Khel, Saggri, Akora and Barak are sub clans of Khattaks. Barak lives in Karak District, Bhangi Khel resides in Kohat and Mianwali District. Saggri in Jhand Tehsil (Attock District) Senni in Kohat & Gumbat, Akora Khattak in Nizampur, Nowshera and Attock Districts.

Mohmand.

Five platoons. Mohmand have two major clans Alimzai and Tarakzai. Alimzai have six sub clans namely Darpa Khel, Bhabhi Khel, Dawat Khel, Rarra Khel, Katar Khel, Yousaf Khel ; they all reside in Ghandara Agency. Other clan Tarakzai lives in Michni, Swabi and Tangi Prang {Shabqadar area}.

Marwat.

Three platoons, they were inducted in 1993.

Orakzai.

Five platoons. They live in Kurram Valley, adjacent Tirah Valley. Orakzai Agency itself was formed in 1973, a small patch of Orakzai Agency is adjacent to Thal on Kurram. There are four major clans in terms of population namely Ali Khel, Mishti, Shaikhan and Maula Khel. Overall there are eighteen sub clans from which Tochi Scouts are recruited out of them only two clan follows Shia faith {Baramad Khel & Manni Khel}. The clans in addition to name above are Feroze Khel, Akhel, Rabpa Khel, Mamazai, Bezoi Khel, Khuidad Khel, Utman Khel, Daulat Zai, Alisher Zai, Massuzai.

Swati.

Two platoons, inducted in 2007 from Thal Scouts as part of No.6 Wing. There are six clans of Swati in Tochi Scouts. Bismillah Khel, Tora Khel, Fazal Khel, Umra Khel, Paggra Khel, Qamar Khel and Khan Khel. They all live in District Manshehra. People of Haripur also enroll in the vacancy of Swati. Subedar Laiq Muhammad Bismillah Khel Swati is the Qaum Commander (he is the first Qaum Commander) he joined Tochi Scouts in 2007.

Turi.

Six platoons they all belong to Kurram Agency, all Shias. They have Daparzai, Alizai and Bangash (Turi Bangash), Doprzai, Ghunday Khel, Mastu Khel, Hamza Khel, Badda Khel clans, all inhabit Parachinar area. In other Frontier Corps units Badda Khel are recruited as separate tribe but in Tochi Scouts they are part of Turi. They migrated from Turkestan. Presently Subedar Noor Hussain Daparzai is the Qaum Commander. He joined Tochi Scouts in 1989.

Yousafzai.

Seven platoons, Mardan, Swat is their recruiting ground.

Wazir.

There are seven platoons of Wazirs in the Tochi Scouts, they belong to the settled areas the two sub clans of Wazirs are Jani Khel and Hati Khel. They are mixed platoons, which means that no single clan have a platoon of their own. Jani Khel lives in area astride Bannu where as Hati Khel are almost in south of Tochi Valley. In the picture down below it is only Wazir who is carrying a weapon and a flower.

9th May 2012, Day Three, 0930 hours

Waiting for the first cup of tea birds are singing but early in the morning there was familiar streaking and shrieking noise of rockets falling close by that is how I awoke up. There is nothing that can be done the only safety is to slip under the bed but somehow the other the mind does not accept this kind of logical solution. The other constant and regular noise is the grass cutting mower. My tea is here.

I spent better half of the day in the museum, the museum in charge is havildar Saeed an Afridi from Khyber Agency briefed me about the general life pattern, he is in Tochi Scouts for last seventeen years. He underwent nine months of training and after that much of his service has been spent on the basketball court. I found three old registers in the lower drawers of the table including an visitors book dated 1953 and find was the fact that Major Zia ul Haq have served here in Tochi Scouts he later became army chief and President of Pakistan ; his another entry was in 1962 when as a commandant of Chitral Scouts he came to attend the Frontier Corps Week. There are other notable dignitaries including the signature of King Saud. I also found three old albums among the heap of rubble, it is amazing how one comes across such rare documents when they are least expected. A visit to the quarter guard to take the pictures and to have a handshake with the smart soldiers, the guard commander at times do fall in the guard and present me with salute I do feel embarrass because I am not authorized such salutes any more.

On my way to the office area I stopped at the G Office and inquired about the availability of the data and documents the civilian superintendent was courteous but talkative and bit pessimistic he however true to Pathan hospitality offered me juice and I recalled the yesterday's narration of how a BHM was willing to leave the appointment because of heavy hospitality expenditures thus I declined still they bought a liter bottle of 7- UP. As I was sitting there Havildar Shah also came in carrying maps and in a bit of hurry as he had to made a sketch.

I had a cup of tea with Lt Col Tariq and Lt Col Rab Nawaz both were wearing the trouser uniform today. Tariq got busy in the case of a subedar who wants a medical board out, Tariq rang the concerned psychiatrist and talked to him highlighting that they themselves had declared the concerned subedar unfit but now they are not signing the papers. After he hang up he updated me on the affair that concern subedar as per psychiatrist is normal but intentionally wants a board out as it will enhance his pension package and was willing to offer a lap top to the doctor for this favour but doctor was not willing to give extra benefits to a person not deserving.

1300 hours. With Havildar Shah I went to the Iftikhar Piquet which is at the eastern corner of the fort overlooking the Miranshah bazar. The piquet by construction seems old probably constructed after the partition it is in three layers . The ground floor is the sleeping area and tubular beds were there with colourful red quilt on one of the bed. Iron stair case takes you to the second floor where two soldiers were on duty, one light machine gun was placed on fixed line the top also has another LMG on fixed line with two more soldiers on duty all wearing trouser and shirt along with suede colour desert shoes.

My first inquiry was about the dress and feedback was not in favour of it the guard commander an Afridi highlighted the fact that in kameez shalwar it was easy to attend the call of nature but with this western dress it is difficult , the soldier highlighted that it was far more

convenient to offer prayers with chappals than with shoes and both view points are valid. Almost all soldiers offer their prayers and it took just seconds to take off chappals where as it takes minutes in removing and again putting on the shoes further more the pack shoes cause foot diseases and requires a support for wearing and taking off. I am not in favour of this uniform change another key factor is the absence of belt on the uniform thus carrying of water bottle and even a weapon on body is cumbersome. The day I came on a helicopter there were six officers and only one was carrying weapon wrapped around his thigh and none was carrying water bottle that includes the three soldiers on board as well and it is all due to the absence of belt.

Miranshah as I observed from the piquet is just like any other frontier town houses built of concrete and mud, narrow and high with water tanks on top of the roof mostly in blue colour and some have wrapped them to keep the heat away. A road passes through it on the one side of the road is all Tochi Scouts area and on the other side is the commercial hub. Rows of trucks were parked and regular movement was going on with a truck moving after every half an hour, cars are mostly white in colour Toyota hatch back there is one Suzuki FX also motorcycles are also there but not many. In the rear of the fort boundary wall is an open area which was previously used as the parade ground of Tochi Scouts and behind it the stadium built by the political agent but now deserted and occupied by the troops of Tochi Scouts which have their post there I am tempted to go there but pend it till tomorrow . A Steiner binocular and night vision goggles are also available , I scanned the town with the help of binocular there are two high water tanks, a hospital which is obvious because of high trees , Havildar Shah informed me that previously they used to provide the ration to the hospital but no more. All around the fort but especially in this quadrant there are anti personal mines but no trip flares, I also noticed the scarcity of barbed wire. My eyes immediately caught the red shirt of a woman sitting with her children one of which was wearing a parrot coloured clothes and clothing was western. It is a scrap store and the owner clad in white kameez shalwar along with black waist coat and a pugree was walking leisurely, I observed two more men also wearing white dress a woman clad in black was sitting next to a wall waiting for the transport, a man relieving himself against the wall. The building that catches your sight is the Hotel Khushboo from the binocular I could see the telephone number of the hotel as well, a little bit of concentration and I could pick a man wearing white dress and sitting in the balcony. The wall of the hotel had the advertisement of Pepsi and 7 UP painted, the wall of this hotel and almost all the other buildings have the familiar gun firing scars. It was prayer time and the small mosque was visible where majority of the faithful were children. The three shops on the main road all deals in auto decoration and fourth one deals with tyres.

I wonder is there someone watching me? There must be a sniper sitting some where and as I was scanning the town he must be doing the same. I could not dare to ask for a helmet or a body armour it would have been below the acceptance level of Scouts. I remained at the piquet for an hour and then moved down with Shah. Later we went to see the information room of the Tochi Scouts I am impressed with the facilities and lay out, have not seen a pool table in information room saw one today, good selection of books and magazines especially the weekly Akhbar e Jahan with its female centre fold seems to be an attractive issue. We also walk to the cobbler shop and through out this I found Shah to be an excellent company. The cobbler showed his inability to make a chappal for me as he has no leather right now but hopefully he will get the leather in next convoy coming from Bannu. Also went to see the cook houses, every wing has separate cook house.

1845 hours. I just sat outside and enjoyed the weather which is cloudy and chances of thunder and rain are pretty high. Captain Shoaib the Aide De Camp of Major General Ali Abbas came to inquire if I am comfortable. We talked about so many trifle affairs and as I was telling him that how the promotion of Ali Abbas is so motivating for the rest of the army. Ali in academy was clean shaved

but after few years of service he started keeping a beard which kept on growing in size. By 2001 when he was commanding officer of the 4 Baloch Regiment which was the president guard battalion also, he still kept his beard and one day President Musharraf while shaking hands with him moved forward and then turned back and asked ' what you said?' and Ali's reply was ' Sir I am commanding officer of your guard battalion'. In those days many of the even committed officers trimmed their beards but Ali was exception and he kept on rising in military career and finally he became a Major General. At this I heard Ali's voice and when I looked back he was in the room next to mine doing weight lifting. Later we both had a cup of tea and remembered Captain Javed our course mate and Ali's best friend and soul mate.

1945 Hours. Havildar Shah arrived with the famous Bannu Niswar, I had requested him in the morning because I was curious as to what type of intoxication if at all the troops take and traditionally the Pathans take niswar so I am going to try that to get a feeling of local culture, the other cultural thing is hashish but I am bit reluctant in asking it but I think I should do it to get an insight into the native mind set. Shah told me about his family he has six children and he sends his pay to his father who runs the house his parents are alive. He is about to retire in another a year thus he was bit anxious as to what he will do next. I gave him my example that even after four years of retirement I am still trying to cope up with the life. We talked of military life and found that we both feel more comfortable in regimental life rather than sitting in the house with family. Shah confessed that after ten days of leave in his hometown he feels home sick for the Scouts and I nodded . Shah also highlighted that in his area the Talibans have strong hold and it is some times very frustrating for him when they talk evil of Frontier Constabulary 'I do not know what is right or wrong but I cannot bear any bad word about my corps'. We both sat and enjoyed the rain drops.

2015 Hours. I met Lieutenant Colonel Suleman in the veranda of the mess and after few words about the weather and introduction {he is commanding officer of 25 Cavalry} he has been a squadron commander during operations in Swat Valley and now his regiment is deployed over 400 Kilometres of area. One tank at so and so post , two tanks there, four tanks at Razmak and so on , his two tanks are deployed at an elevation of 9000 feet as well. The regiment is leaving for Gujranwala cantonment by end of this month in fact the advance body is leaving tomorrow.

2245 hours. The roar of artillery guns is echoing the valley, it is the army guns which are firing at the suspected targets. It looks odd to pass comments on the military affairs because the men who are directing it are capable and well educated yet I cannot resist to pass on the comments on the effectiveness of such fire if morale is the key factor than these shells are serving their purpose but if inflicting casualties is the aim then it needs revision because artillery guns are practically firing blind and there is no guarantee that two rounds fire one after the other will fall at the same spot thus chances of collateral damage are more in artillery firing than employing cobras. The Cobras are well equipped and have been used in the past for night firing however the level of training remains the key issue because the pilot of Mi-17 with whom I flew from Peshawar to Miranshah had the crib that despite being trained in night vision flying he has not been allowed to practice it for last six years.

2300 hours. Two more rounds have been fired.

What is this war all about none is clear and how to fight it remains an enigma. To my mind there seems to be a bit of reluctance on part of army , Scouts on the other hand are more aggressive but being under command of army they are being held in reins furthermore the change of uniform has deteriorated the fighting capability of the Scouts. My query is why cannot the town of Miranshah be cleared of anti state elements? What is stopping army ? there is no political issues attached with such

kind of operations because even in present docile state the rebels are inflicting casualties on the military and they are quite serious in numbers thus any further retaliation from them is of no consequence. On the other hand an iron hand is the law of the land, if there is one round being fired from the town then at least a thousand rounds should be fired as an answer, the town can be evacuated similar to Briggs Plan of Malaya but the question of winning the hearts and mind of the population seems to be a futile effort at least in this area. With armour and gun ships placed a mere 100 meters away from the town yet the town is out of bound for all.

On every Sunday there is a curfew imposed in the area to allow the road movement of vehicles for replenishment of troops at posts. A tank is practically a fort on wheels but I have not heard or seen them rolling through the bazar as show of force. If fire is coming then move the tanks and hit the suspected building with a round, Cobras can fire thousands of rounds in minutes they can hover just above the town and practically nothing can move without their notice yet there is a wave of fear not among the natives but among the army and I am part of it.

Day Four.

2300 hours. Return of Superman is on HBO and out side it is calm and apparently peaceful, weather is fine and it had rain rather light showers in the evening, there was no fire from both adversaries today. The Frontier Warfare was dubbed as a kind of gentleman's game and I think it is rather true to some extent at least from military point of view where the civilian casualties are a consideration although the other side is least pushed about this aspect. I awoke early in the morning and then again went to sleep and then woke up at 1000 hours and later cursed my self for wasting this time. Went to the political agent's office the same very official who came with us in the helicopter from Peshawar and was an ardent supporter of using force. In his office few locals were also sitting with their classic turbans but in my opinion none of them was a Malik or man of influence this is what I gathered from their out fit but still I was bit excited to see the local inhabitants. PA was very courteous he rose and so did all others probably it is due to the fact that General is my course mate but I think the PA himself is quite a polished person. He gave me two books one is in Pushto a 800 page book written on Waziristan by a Laiq who works in the political agents office but resides in the city probably he will come tomorrow. I also noticed the 16 volumes of Gazetter of India with coloured maps in the PA's office. I was tempted to ask him about the opium and hashish usage in the agency but wisely pend it off. Then I went to Commandant's office but he had gone for the debriefing, had a telephone chat with Tiger later I collected the data of Tochi Scouts on the USB from the clerk, I appreciate his initiave to run the generator for my work although I insisted that it can wait but he did so, this is the difference between army and Scouts, in army the clerk would have given me ten logics that why the generator cannot be run now in the absence of commandant and would have consulted at least three officers before giving me any answer. I called Havildar Shah and he came promptly again a sign of good regiment, we both went to clothing store first , I also noticed the three boards being painted with the name of Tochi Scouts soldiers who have died in last 100 years, I made a mental note to talk to commandant about this as from where he collected the names. The clothing store was opened promptly it is bit damp and not well organised. The equipment or rather the clothing is all new and nothing of any historical value. The Scouts have got a winter jacket, a sleeping bag / razzai, desert shoes. The socks are green in colour and woollen in nature so I inquired 'do you wear this in winter? And Shah replied that we wear it in all seasons, the clothing store keeper then showed the new socks which are again woollen but still bearable on this Shah was rather annoyed as to why it has not been issued so far. I was keen to see the whole equipment but that was all, where are the gloves and I was told that there are no gloves as part of the uniform, neither they have got any kit bag or big pack not

even small pack is part of kit. The water bottle is made of plastic and without any discussion absolutely useless.

Later we both went to library and I started from the very first book and then for next four hours I went through each and every book anticipating something to find. What a pleasure it is to go through the complete library, Scouts libraries are bound to have something rare in them for the reason that they remain stationed at one place and being remote they have rich collection of books and Tochi Scouts are no exception although the quantity is not that large. The Blackwood magazine of 1919, John Masters, Winston Churchill speeches and books, travels, geography, fiction and much more. Majority of the books were published and purchased in 1900s the oldest which I found dates back to 1890. Through these books one can mentally travel back in time all books of that era had conservative romance in them, two books caught my attention one deals with the confession of a gigolo and other that of an innkeeper. I was searching for Venus In India but it was not there however I hit the jack pot when I discovered the Standing Orders of the Corps published in 1926 that has lessened my task immensely, few secret documents dealing with the tribes were also found amidst a heap of old newspapers. I had my lunch at 1700 hours.

Later Major General Ali Abbass came to my room and we talked and behave like course mates and then went for a walk which we had to cut short as he had to go for his prayers. I sat and luckily Lt Col Suleman the 25 Cavalry commanding officer also came in and over a cup of tea we shared history. On my inquiry as to what kind of tactics the tanks are using here or more precisely what are the fears and dangers he or the tanks are facing. He updated me that one of his tank in South Waziristan was knocked out of action by the Talibans by hitting it with a SPG-9 rocket launcher, secondly the rebels have been too good in sniping they have shot two tank crew members on their head when they put up their head through the cupola thus now the crew keeps the tank sealed while operating, in another instance the rebels hit the front of the tank while it was turning on a hill track, the front of a tank has 220 mm of armour plating and it is not confirmed as what kind of weapon they employed. The other deadly tactics of the rebels is to use improvised explosive device {IED} which accounts for over 75% of all casualties in military. For tanks the rebels use barrel fill with explosives and then burying it under the earth on the probable route of tanks, the bottom of tank has only 20 mm of armour thus it is deadly. The end result of all these or the cumulative effect is that the tanks now requires a bomb disposal team to walk ahead and infantry to provide protection from snipers. On my query of using the armour personnel carriers {APC} he disagreed with the idea of using them and he cited the Swat operations where an APC carrying 22 soldiers was hit by a rocket and all were killed to him an APC is a death capsule. This led to me saying then what are the chances of survival in a conventional warfare if these weapons cannot hold their ground in such a small scale conflict but his logics are valid that conventional warfare is conventional in nature and easy to fight as the rules of engagements are quite clear. What it means is that in a conventional warfare the soldier knows that he will not be slaughtered if he surrenders.

I had a walk with Ali Abbas and discussions ranged from the exceptional qualities of our late course mate Javed Akhtar who and Ali were regarded as two sides of one coin, he still rang his family on 25th April the day Javed died in an avalanche 23 years ago and on 30th March which happens to be Javed's birthday. Ali Abbass shared his war experiences of South Waziristan where his brigade became the pioneer in pushing back the rebels, Ali led the attack himself and confessed that it was pure luck that he survived the day as he stood on the banks of a ravine while the fire was coming from all direction and all his staff officers had hit the ground. Ali has a notion that he is lucky and a chosen one by the God and in support of his logic he has his military career to prove his point where he has been kind of unconventional in various tiers of command and staff, I personally think his main

strength is his innocence and simple way of life apart from sense of humour. The threat of locals attacking the Miranshah is quite real and he discussed the scenario with Colonel Wajahat and Brigadier Aqeel, he is quite right because even a handful of rebels can create panic and havoc in the camp and it is very much in their capability to strike at the divisional headquarters. I asked Ali do you have any weapons with you and he replied affirmative so I told him I in such scenario will be coming to his room.

There is a war going on but to me the things are not in orders, I don't see any camera surveillance of the area neither any watch dogs or horse patrolling and above all I am off the opinion that soldiers must fire at least 1000 rounds daily without any reason just to keep the upper hand. Officers do walk around in the evening without carrying any weapon and for that matter almost a quarter of soldiers strength at any given time are away from their weapons especially the officers. In classic terms every one must carry a weapon even while attending the call of nature because this is what frontier warfare is all about, unexpected chain of events and sheer brutality.

Every night I sleep in perpetual fear as to when the rocket will come and more dreadfully when a rebel is going to walk into my room I have nothing but an ashtray to hit back, at times I wonder how I am going to react to such situation, there is no escape route my only safety is in keeping the room pitch dark, I better get some knife.

Sunday 13th May 2012-Day 7th

It is 1000 hours and I am still lying on the bed thinking about how to write the history of this corps I better move fast. In last two days nothing much has happened, let me go backward. Yesterday there was a brunch for the out going political agent Mr Yahya Akhund, it was lavish and well organised the dinning hall was well decorated I was invited through a card and it is almost after three years that I have been invited in such a manner I am grateful to Colonel Wajahat for this I was made to sit on the head table with the General Ali. The discussion among all of them on the table was about the operations with regular jokes and remarks about the last night drill, the over all atmosphere was very informal rather too informal, there seems that these army officers have nothing else to talk about other than the operations, well the point to bring home is that it is normal but then these discussions must take place in a more formal manner in the office which they had and on dinning table the subjects must vary otherwise the orders and instructions lost their impact, Wajahat seems to be the only officer who refrained in getting into the discussion.

I then spent some time in the library with Colonel Wajahat later on since my computer had crashed thus I was mentally worried and made a request to Captain shoaib for a person to have a look which he promptly did. Tochi Scouts are looking after me the way a newly wed groom is looked after in the bride's home, they are concerned about my comfort my food the cigarettes that I smoke , it is this pressure that I am feeling lest I do something wrong which I am bound to do sooner or later.

In the evening I went to a walk with M. Shah I went to his barrack , the establishment branch has mixed gathering of all qaums otherwise all other live collectively in a barrack with their qaum members. Shah treated me with tea and cake pieces, the barracks were neat and clean and had an aroma as well quite a change from the normal military barracks. There were no posters or girlie pictures but still it had a unique touch of the area, the floor had the carpet and two pillows were placed I took off my shoes as per tradition. The bed sheet of a khattak havildar was quite colourful . Myself and Shah then walked towards the western side of the airfield, first I noticed a stable where they have mules and donkeys and no horses, there were two young very young mules having a playful time

running around and kicking in the air. We went through the wheat fields which is now under the process of being cutting and wrapping. Major General Ali Abbass also went on an inspection of the posts inside the camp with an entourage of vehicles he stopped and we had a chat. Later Shah asked me about the General and I told him we are course mates and Ali is a fine general, in any case Ali enjoys a very good reputation mainly because of his white flowing beard which instantly commands respect in these environments. The firing range post is made of mud all on self help basis it overlooks the road, through the binocular I observed the opposite movement, Shah warned me to watch for my head as the snipers can hit and fire at any time. On the road was normal vehicular traffic a godown was unloading the trucks mainly carrying food sacks probably the wheat, two men were sitting idle in a corner, an old man walked quite close to the post, dosen of boys were playing cricket. The area in front of the post is leveled and raised with mud and barbed wires are erected, the distance of post to the road is approximately 100 metres , inside the post which itself comprises of two observation towers there were three rocket propelled grenades and one light machine gun apart from standard small machine gun, on my question I got the reply from that last time post came under fire was six years ago thus it is mainly the post opposite the bazar which is hot and receives regular rockets from Taliban.

Myself and Shah then walk through the fields and Shah highlighted that it was Commandant Faqir Hussain who converted this barren land into present day fields and planted all these fruit trees it is a mammoth task , hats off to Colonel Faqir for such splendid work because all around now are fruit trees and agricultural land, one tube well was inaugurated by the governor in 2005 in an old building. Batair are favourite pets of Scouts and in the field I saw nets being erected , Shah told me that it is for catching Batair, quite amazing that amidst all this chaos the Batair bazi is on. We walked on the runway, there are two runways one is 32 which is the main and concrete but I noticed that the rubber used for bonding the slabs is coming out and it can cause damage to the aircraft, previously there used to be two commercial flights run by the Peshawar Flying Club from Miranshah. I thought of Lawrence of Arabia and tried to figure out where he lived and I am sure he walked through these fields enjoying the scenic beauty which is sprinkled with ever present fear of a bullet coming through.

Later we both went to the stables and came to know that the two young mules are in fact donkeys born only a fortnight ago. The mules were previously utilised for load carrying and supply of water to the posts they are rather under utilised now because of envoirnments, on my inquiry I came to know that not much of horses are under the use of locals.

We later climbed to the air traffic control tower which is the oldest building of the garrison, it is three storeyed high with narrow wooden stairs, a good mannered signaller by the name of Pervez was there he is quite decent and initially I thought he is an officer or from air force. He was busy on telephone trying to find if any aircraft of ours is flying in the area because a unit has inquired in Razmak about because they have heard the sound and Javed at his own gave them the orders to fire and later started checking from various airfields but there was no flight plan of any friendly aircraft.

I asked Shah to get some hashish for me and now lets see what happens ,is he going to report about me, it will be a test of the Scouts culture and mind set. I am quite keen to see the end result, if he tells the commandant it will be quite embarrassing because in all probability the commandant will say ‘ sir you should have told me’.

At night there was dinner for the PA from the division again a well organised affair good food, Russian salad, roast beef, mutton, pulao and then a real sweet fruit custard followed by green tea in the lawn. Ali made a very good speech for the PA highlighting how vital is the PA for the success

of operations and acknowledging the limitation of army officers in the understanding of native culture, it is not every day that an army general is so candid and forthright in lavishing praise to a civilian. After dinner myself and Ali had a walk in the lawn for well over an hour in which I tried to understand the operation from the beginning.

Ali Abbas on promotion in 2007 was initially marked for 57 infantry brigade but as the luck would have it he landed in another brigade where he reported at night put his family in a guest room and next morning left Okara with the brigade for Taank.

2330 hours.

Finally Havildar Shah or shall I say Airman Shah alias Colonel T. E. Lawrence has finally brought a good quality of hashish good enough for two cigarettes , I had one a few minutes ago and few seconds ago a rocket has been fired presumably from our worthy tribesmen and instantly one round of artillery has been our answer, in the evening when I went for a walk with Shah , I picked him up from his barrack where he was busy playing Ludo, he looked tired in the afternoon when he came to my room I had nothing special to say to him other than to inquire about the hashish because he had left the map sheets yesterday when I was at dinner but where was the stuff but I did not had the courage to ask him so we just made a plan to go for walk after the prayers which are at 1645 hours. We just at the Tochi stadium stairs , Shah had already told me that this stadium which had the plaque of 1957 was in two tier of grounds one higher than the other but Commandant Faqir made it levelled, it was a mammoth task almost twenty trolleys of mud was brought for this purpose. I just ask him general things whether they have fights among themselves since so many qaums live here and although it is rare yet it happens, even in Tochi Scouts there was one Subedar ...who ran amock and became a rebel in 1941. But Shah said no it has never happened, I asked do you Scouts marry the local girls, Shah did not understood me correctly and said 'yes we do attend local marriage parties, in the past the influential and rich people used to invite the officers and soldiers also' but on my explaining him the purpose he said ' no, we Pathan do marry among our own qaum, if there is no girl in the family then in the qaum but not outside'. He himself offered to go for a walk and volunteered to offer the prayers at the post it has something to do with the fact that the call for prayers went at 1715 hours and he was bit embarrassed for being wrong in the times.

We walked through the wheat fields which have stony wide enough for vehicular traffic pathways with trees at regular paces. While walking I normally tells him the age of the trees and other buildings and sometimes he corrects me and updates on the actual dates. You know sahiba that colonel ghulam hussain did lot of work he quipped when I really praised the work done. There was wheat lying every where, Scouts were not very happy with him because he made them do lot of work, I laughed and said Shah this is something very peculiar about military that no one likes to work more than what he is doing before but than you can see the rewards all around you. He nodded and said this is what every one thinks now. We reached the post and enroute I joked to him that we are being watched by the snipers and anytime he can fire if he so desires so lets thus move with the cover of the trees so as to make him think and he agreed. There is a tank of 25 Cavalry placed on a rampart overlooking the whole of town the Sowar was taking a bath with the help of trailer water we kept on walking forward. The post is classic in nature made of mud and nothing but mud and wood for roof beams. I stood at the wall and had a look at the people and things which I do not have a proper word to explain shall I say my people, my country men or miscreants and talibans or tribesmen, Waziri or Tauri or Mahsud. It is the junction of the town and a fleet of Toyota taxis were parked alongwith the two trucks. A motorcycle rickshaw similar to quin chi of Punjab but different also moved around

without much of noise. Three young men walked and the Scout sentry shouted and waved to them so did the Subedar of Tochi Scouts the post commander and they promptly obeyed they were without any weapons. I had the binoculars with me courtesy of Subedar This was the junction of the road coming from north and town starts from here. In front was the boys school and girls college both under control and occupation of tribesmen , I could see clothes hanging out and with more focus I thought I could see women clothing but they were male apparently a vest and shalwar. The gaps were filled with bricks by the tribesmen. Post commander told me that from this building and the one behind it is the base of rocket fire where as the grenades launched from sub machine gun by the miscreants is from the Khushboo hotel direction. I remained fascinated with the area and the people wondering who are they, there was a fear and apprehension this place is void of any rules of engagements. An army captain came up the beauty of the new uniform is philosophically understood here at least in terms of shrinking of ranks, it was only when he introduced himself did I came to know that he is a captain. Aqeel was full of inquisitiveness and I admire his wearing of helmet and bullet proof vest and after few minutes I ponder over the famous quotation that discretion is the better part of valour and I moved down .

The souts at post offered their prayers and my self and Shah were initially offered drinks and then tea in which the Captain Aqeel and his two other soldiers were also invited. Yesterday and today at both posts the quality of drinks was exceptional, yesterday it was juice and today a kind of cola. I also noticed a deep freezer at the post, in the menu tonight was the chicken which we saw being slaughtered while coming towards the post. Later the Wing subedar Major came on the Honda 125 which have been provided to all subedar majors of the Tochi Scouts what a commendable thing, it has enhanced their status and increased their efficiency manifolds, yesterday and today I saw the subedar majors making rounds of the posts, this SM took the post commander up and gave him few instructions and then joined us for tea. Captain Aqeel was still trying to understand from his Havildar as to what happened last Sunday at the Amin Post which was mere a kilometer away on high ground and yet almost soldiers were killed and equal number slaughtered. Myself and shah left and I asked Shah as to what happened at the Amin Post he was not knowing much more than what I already knew and I knew more than him. While walking back we stopped at the Mule Stable and leisurely watched the animals I showed him the two newly born donkeys which were playing with each other, since today is a mothers day thus I witnessed this god gifted quality of a female caring for the new sibling among the donkeys, the more beautiful one had a heart full of milk from the mother's well.

Now I think that I am sitting on a probable dynamite because there are two military cultures on the protection, one that of Tochi Scouts and other 7 Division of Army. What I have gather here in last seven days is that there is no need of artillery here when Cobras are available. Similar to the 1922 when Royal Air Force took over the role of providing the firepower and Scouts the ground troops and Political Agent the one looking after the politics, thus there is no need of army because army is the other name of firepower and that Tochi Scouts have enough and what is required here is to have the gunships under the command of the Commandant just the way artillery pieces and armour is already under his command as an integral part of the Tochi Scouts.

Monday 14th May 2012.2230 hours.

Relatively a peaceful day no firing no rockets although there was one artillery round fired early in the morning. Had tea break with Commandant there was another officer who came today from forward post and he narrated some odd events of the Durand Line. I after consultation with Colonel Wajahat got in touch with an old subedar he was enrolled in 1974 and retired in 1996 he

updated me regarding the infrastructure of the Miran Shah camp. Majority rather the very first face lift after arrival in Miran Shah took place in 1957 which was probably the result of General Ayub Khan then army chief visit to Miranshah which resulted in the construction of sports stadium, quarter guard and monument apart from construction of main gate. The other major renovation took place starting from 2000 onwards when the mess, museum, centenary monument and construction of living quarters took place and that is still going on with demolishing of buildings and construction of new one is taking place.

In the evening I went to see the tennis and what a treat it was to witness the routine evening games, they have two tennis courts one clay other cemented, court was well marked with limestone and half a dozen pickers in Tochi Scouts track suits with brown Servis Cheetah sports shoes, an array of rackets were there. The game was as usual full of fun, standard being not very high but with progress of time it became better and better and with that I mean that rally and shots were displayed Commandant has a powerful serve. The other players included the artillery commander and logistics commander who paired with commandant. The tennis went on till half past seven in between the game was stopped and every body came to attention at retreat which was sounded at quarter past six. I had a refreshing and warm cup of tea rather I had three cups of tea in the course of the game, a smartly dressed waiter was there to serve. The military tennis is unique from the way tennis is played in a sense that it is full of jokes and yells, no body minds the fouls and generally it is the interpretation of the senior which matters, there was no line man and it was on code of honour. Almost two hundred yards away are the miscreants and rocket and machine gun fire can come down at any time thus this game becomes historical in nature and no where in the world has tennis ever been played so close to the line of fire.

Wednesday 16th May 2012-Day 10. 1435 hours

Well Colonel Wajahat has gone on leave and such is the impact of his office and his own personality that I am feeling relaxed although I have nothing to do with official affairs, this helps in understanding the culture of Scouts in particular and also of the army in general, as long as the Commandant is in his office or even in station there is a fear of appointment and respect for the institution now Lieutenant Colonel Tariq is acting commandant and as such he assumes the mantle and runs the affairs of the Scouts. I had a lively discussion with the officers at tea break over the geo-political scenario. These officers are no exception in having an perception which is prevalent rather always has been as long as there is a civil government in chair that things are wrong and corruption is rampant in every institution. I put across my perspective over the question put across by Tariq ‘ would I support the present regime? And my answer was in affirmative to the surprise of all, on the next question as to why should I do, my answer was that since if we look around in the region we see Libya, Egypt and now Syria descending into chaos despite having very strong economies, Iran is under fire thus the very fact that we as a nation are heading for a general elections not because of any unrest or agitation but for the reason that the assemblies have completed or about to complete their legitimate tenure by itself is a great achievement of the regime and now it is up to public to keep the present status quo or bring in new faces. The world has undergone tumultuous changes in last ten years some very strong economies have crumbled like Spain and Portugal but Pakistan has shown stability. I found almost all less Major Zamir having the same stereo type version of corruption and lack of sincere leadership as the major cause of our problems, I highlighted the fact that it was none other than Mr Jinnah who started this by not accepting Bengali as a national language and by

dismissing the government of NWFP after the transfer of power in 1947 but he cannot be criticized under the provision of constitution. Pakistan's has progressed and is progressing and will progress in future because this is the verdict of history our advancement in nuclear field is a clear indication of our potential our record in sports is another feather in cap. On Durand Line the historical facts are different when Pakistan has adjusted its borders with Iran and China in both cases giving away some territory than what stops us in adjusting the same with Afghanistan, probable cause is the mind set of early rulers who were anti pathan in historical pattern.

Captain Hammad and myself later had tea together in major Zamir's office the Tochi Scouts medical officer is from Wazirabad an important small town on the eastern bank of Chenab in Punjab. Hammad mentioned that how rumours spread for instance one of his course mate on face book showed his concern for Hammad and highlighted that the exact number of casualties on 8th May skirmish with miscreants is own 36 dead and 92 wounded. Captain Hammad laughed and said ' Sir I was there from beginning till end and numbers are in range of less than a dosen' and I am witness to this fact because on the very day when I arrived on that fateful Sunday he came back limping after three hours. I did not asked him then as it was out of customs but now I asked him what happened from his point of day.

It was road opening day on Sunday , one day a week the curfew is imposed in the city and environs for the people to stay inside anybody seen outside is taken as a foe whether he has committed a hostile act or not. The tribes have come up with a technique and tactics which is novel effective lethal and yet primitive. Improvised explosive devices {IED} are the mostly deadly weapons after suicidal human bomb, in it explosives are placed in a container a shopping bag or hid under the bush or buried under the ground or road and then when the convoy is over it or a vehicle or a party of soldiers it can be detonated either through a mobile phone or a time watch or even pressure. The state has terminated the mobile communication in the tribal frontier. Presently a Sapper walks in front with prodding device thus it is a sapper not the infantry which is leading the war against the tribes. This sapper is protected by a section of infantry or the scouts presently it is done by the army , this is tiring and time consuming because to clear inch by inch of road which is winding and has abundant cover in terms of green patches and boulders thus by and large it is a chance which has to be taken by all. Hammad had gone with his quick reaction force of 24 Scouts in three Toyota Vigos and an ambulance to the Amin Post which is around two kilometers from here and made of mud and on a high ground overlooking the valley that lies on the south western edge and the exit towards the South Waziristan through Razmak. The G. O. C Ali Abbas had gone to Islamabad on a week end, within the Miranshah the divisional policy of leave is one week after one month of stay and fourteen days after two months which is quite liberal rather more than what troops and officers had in the Siachen deployment, however commanders seldom use this on themselves especially Ali normally goes on an odd week end after a month and this time it was his youngest son's son birthday so he had taken an extra day off as well. Thus commander 103 Brigade became the acting divisional commander for the duration.

According to Captain Hammad after some time he went to Bannu Road check post and later he was called back in the area at the base of Amin Post. He went there and saw the commanding officer 36 Baloch Regiment alongwith the brigade commander. The intent was to search a mud compound next to a Aligand, it seems so normal and casual that no need of having verbal orders was felt and neither they were given by any one. The affair from the young scout officer's perspective was an enjoyable experience and he laid down under a tree with the another officer and enjoyed and talked about the forthcoming event, anything can happen this could be their last hour. The compound was composed of three mud houses, Scouts Subedar Shariff was the first one to enter and he climbed onto the roof without any help of ladder and shouted that ' we have come here for search bring out your

women out side and we will respect them'. There was no reply and Hammad and other officer Captain Mehmood entered the two mud huts simultaneously and kicked the door and in they dashed , that is the moment when everything in the world stops and next move is the one on which you're your existence depends. The third mud house remained silent somehow the other it was not charged simultaneously and now all of a sudden the door opens and a man fires a burst of AK- 47 which hits the Mehmood on the legs and with this fire a panic starts and every kind of fire by the inner and outer cordon starts opening on to the mud house. These search parties came out of the compound and took cover in the nullah and remain in the same position, after some time I went to the ...post which is on the road coming from Bannu

Yesterday.

Yesterday I had a bad day as I slept most of the day and tried to figure out how to go about the history it was helped by the hashish given by Shah and it was the major factor of laziness as well. The thing with hashish is that it gives new and wonderful vistas of research and ideas but makes one lazy enough to just have these in minds but I have to put them in black & white. In the evening I went for a walk with Shah, we first had a walk inside the complex talking and guessing about the probable dates of construction of various buildings, the photographs which I saw in old albums clearly indicates that the outer cordon was made of soldiers barracks and that still exists, the tree next to the hospital is also there but now it has become old. The lone hut over the barrack at the main gate is the command net where they are still using the Morse Code system and according to the operator it is the quickest and most effective, they have two such machines. From there we went outside the gate { Mohammad Ali shaheed Gate} and first had a stop at the subedar Mirjan's wood trading shop; he was not there were two locals who offered cup of tea which I politely declined and myself and Shah walked through the family quarters, these quarters were property of Haqqani the world renowned terrorist but now they have been converted into family quarters of Scouts, the main hujra of Haqqani is the now family and women training centre and Haqqani's mosque is used by all.

The children were playing cricket in the stony park, there is a college also which is now deserted and it an army battalion living inside however in the college playing fields the local boys were playing cricket. Coming back to the park, behind the park a tubewell was running and it is quite pleasurable and soothing to see water gushing out with such volume, a girl of eight years was playing with her friends riding the tri cycle she I am afraid has now entered into an age where she is bit over age to sit on a tri cycle. The Tochi Scouts have their own dairy farm and they have one of the most healthy cows which I have seen at least in Pakistan, they recently purchased seven cows and two buffaloes and now have over a dosen milk producing animals, they are selling milk at an astonishing low price of rupees twenty per litre, there is a bio gas plant as well with a capacity of 15- 20 kilograms per day. Myself and Shah had cup of tea at the dairy farm, traditionally the scouts put out their steel charpoys for us with pillows and we had tea, the tea with pure milk now tastes bit different and it was with difficulty that I finished it off amidst the cow dung smell. We later walked back through the Christians quarters, there are two colonies of Christians here one in the political agent colony and other here in the Tochi Scouts yet there is no remnant's of any old church in the Miranshah, now the present commandant has made one in the colony by converting one of Haqqani's residence into church but it has no cross.

I dropped in at Major General Ali Abbas room which is next to me and had tea with him, it is very soothing to sit with a course mate and Ali is a fine officer although we have very little in common ,our views about the world are poles apart. The discussion drifted to the world politics, Ali

has a theory that the Americans are behind the militants because they want to disintegrate Pakistan therefore they are supporting factions which are fighting against the army. He further elaborated that India has opened ten consulates on Pakistan – Afghan border mainly to destabilize the country but they will not succeed as Pakistan is an ideological country a blessed one with the holy prophet himself taking care of it and it was the holy prophet himself who ordered Mr Jinnah while he was in self exile in London to go back to India. It is only as a course mate that I can strongly disagree with him and I did because my point of view is that a strong and stable Pakistan is in the interest of India because of her economic compulsions and also for America as well, the topic then touched the Rodick Mines in Baluchistan and how Americans are creating hindrance in its progress. Somehow the other this American hate phobia is difficult to understand and on this we both agreed because we both come from a background where we had an access to the western cultures resultantly in any Olympics we would always support the Americans in their matches against Russians, how this has changed is an enigma. Presently Ali narrated that two thousand militants of Tehrik Taliban Pakistan has been forced to leave Miranshah, I do not think that it has happened because here in the camp the rumours circulate quite fast and it is more of morale boosting but I nodded my head in agreement with Ali. The major groups fighting against the army are difficult to pin point but the main leader is Baitullah Mahsud of South Waziristan, Commander Nazir Group popularly known as CNG and then Gul Bahadur of Miranshah, now the CNG and Gul Bahadur have left Mahsud and are operating independently but their targets are Americans in Afghanistan and not the Pakistan Army, the militants have been stressing that they have no ideological conflict with Pakistan Army so it is better if they leave the area.

The million dollar question that whether Pakistan Army is helping these groups is obvious from the events of last ten days, army is confined to the camp a prisoner of own walls, none can dare to go out for the fear of Taliban is paramount, what is that fear? it is the brutality of them and knowing fully well that no logic can appeal to them so to say that Pakistan Army is helping them is absolutely false, sympathies are there but nothing beyond this. To me and many other living here there is no grand strategy or designs it is mere survival, all the cards are in the hands of locals they dictate the terms, army or political agent has cosmetic influence they can only talk and here it is not words that matter but the firepower which is understood by all.

Today.2350 hours.

I have finally finished the hashish in the morning and decided that enough is enough. Went to the political agency office the new political agent has not arrived yet. The office area is similar to any such compound all over the Pakistan, saw two men sitting in the veranda pondering over an antique map of the area showing demarcation of individual lands, few natives sitting under a shade and waiting for their settlement of cases. I was taken by the Tochi Scouts sentry to the superintendent's office whom I explained my purpose of visit, he was in picture and send me to another office which had the notice of English Record Office, I was again interviewed by a clerk and then after much thought he took me to another office where he talk in Pashto to another clerk, I could see heap of old files and just wanted to sit there and read them but I was taken to head clerk's office who after a short interview gave the decision that before proceeding any further I must have a written letter indicating what I want, I left. I went to the Major Zamir's office who immediately dialled assistant political agent and spoke in Pashto and matter was resolved.

The Tochi Scouts firing team is ready and Captain Hamza is in charge of them a fine cavalry officer he is in fact the regiment officer of the Commandant, another officer was sitting bit gloomy as

his wife was admitted in hospital in Peshawar and wanted to go on leave, but his leave was turned down by the commandant on telephone, Major Zamir gave him consolation. Lieutenant Colonel Rab Nawaz also came in and we had tea. Our discussion touched the officers posting and tenures in Scouts. The account officer was also there and I inquired how they draw the pay, the procedure is that roll sheet is made in the Scouts and check is signed by the political agent and pay is drawn from the National Bank which is located within the agency office compound, now a days the pay or the amount comes from Peshawar on helicopter and then distributed among the troops. Since the troops are living on qaum system thus any one member going on leave takes the pay of all others to their hometown as they all belonged to same area.

Meanwhile there were fire shots and Rab Nawaz mentioned that the sound of fire indicates that it is coming from city area and it was true, they were firing in the town no body bothered to seek any further information on this. I went to museum and saw the old albums again. Had lunch and then a long siesta. Awoke up at 1900 hours and after shower went to Ali's room and had a cup of green tea and few dates. Today our discussion hovers around the technical developments that have taken place within the division. Ali has done quite an innovation in improving the night vision capability of the posts and troops. He had come up with an directive to improve the defence of the posts, the posts presently are having anti personal mines twenty meters away which Ali now wants to push back to three hundred meters, the first line will be high concertina wire then mines then low concertina wire and twenty meters in front of the post will remain free of any obstacle for maintenance purposes. The major breakthrough has been made in night vision devices. There are approximately 60-70 NVG's in every infantry battalion and they have been supplemented with infra red light which is portable and rechargeable thus enhancing the vision up to three hundred meters, the common web cameras have also been turned into infra red cameras with a range of hundred meters. Rifle G-3 have been modified to have night vision sights and telescopes which have been purchased from the open market for 6000 rupees similarly the small tri pod for the rifles have been purchased. There are twenty cameras operating around the fence of the camp and four inside. Mortars have been modified to act as mines by putting together four mortar shells and taking out their firing mechanism and joining them together through ordinary wire and firing switch in the hand of post commander. All very impressive the only draw back is that all this has to be tested under the battle conditions the attack on Amin Post last Sunday would have been the ideal test but it was not put into action. Another infantry brigade is coming as reserve. So much of fire power and man power but still the initiative is with the miscreants and that is the hard pill to swallow that army or for that matter Ali Abbass has not been able to dictate his terms and they are nothing but safe passages of road and liberty and freedom to search any compound suspected of harbouring the miscreants. No military vehicle can operate on road with having massive firepower protection and even then as displayed on Amin Post the miscreants still strikes and create panic among the army.

Friday 18th May 2012

I went to the Political Agent's office but before that I received a call from Colonel Sardar Sajjad just to say hello, I am grateful to him for being so considerate, he is leaving for America on Sunday for a week's course at Alabama and then a month long leave wish him the best.

The same story at PA's office but the staff was friendly, I observe that the tourism calendar in the superintendent's office was covered with white sheet only the dates were visible on my inquisitiveness he said that since the picture distracts while praying and the calendar is in western direction therefore it has been covered. Amin Khan the clerk in charge was called by the assistant political agent whom I had met at the farewell brunch and dinner of the political agent was very kind

he just told Amin to open up the old records almirahs and let me find what ever I am looking at, that serves the purpose.

The English record office is made up of two rooms, in the first room a table and two chairs on which Amin works and the adjoining room is devoid of any furniture just a date mat on the floor and a heap of files in one corner the rooms have been made two storeyed by making almirahs from ground to top. Amin opened one almirah and handed me over the files I was not impressed it dated 1961 then another file dated 1951 regarding the visit programme of governor another file 1946 regarding the status of head clerks in political agents office another file dealing with the character certification of natives dated 1941 and so on finally three files dating back to 1896 they were regarding the pay and allowances of staff. In the meantime many tribesmen came and moved around, I just sat on the datemat and started scanning the files and lost track of time, there files of 1919 regarding the defence of the agency another one dealt with the administrative report of the agency in 1937 and there few pages about Tochi Scouts then two very old pages written by a Scout Officer and another report on Tochi Scouts dating back to 1961, I was unable to hide my happiness, Amin now starting bringing the files the Frontier Gazettes and similar to them, the thaw has melted and there was warmth in his dealing he inquired whether I would like tea or cold drink I politely declined yet he brought a bottle of Mountain Dew, this hospitality of Pathans is legendary and one comes across it at every step here whether own Tochi Scouts or the political agent's office. Amin was muttering something about the British he was praising them for keeping the record so well, by this time the lunch time was there he offered me join him but I made an excuse to him. Amin lives in Mir Ali and everyday comes to work which takes him almost two hours of travelling one way. I was surprised to find him living in Mir Ali and travelling amidst all this chaos daily. The things have gone so wrong here and such is our sieged mentality that any person moving out of the fort area seems to be travelling to outer space, I made a mental note to interact more with him and to learn about the life style he is living, I am interested in social aspects of the life what kind of relationship he is having with his wife and in laws, does he have any fear from Talibans regarding his working in the political agency. So far it seems that Talibans have not imposed such restrictions on the locals but if they do then the machinery is bound to collapse. It was a happy hour. When I came out of that storeroom only then I realised that it is Friday. The loudspeakers all around especially the one in city were blazing with the Khutba, since it was in Pashto so I could not make it but from the tone it was militant in nature.

I in the evening at 1700 hours went to Muhammad Shah's room and from there we both started walking, the sun still hits you at this time. Normally we decide after we have started walking where to go, as we were in the scouts Stadium I looked at the cricket pitch and inquired when it was made although I knew it has been made under present commandant's directive. Shah told me that not long ago a cricket tournament was held here in which Scouts, Army and civilian team from the city also participated I was surprised to hear that teams from city are allowed to play and take part in cricket matches but then this is what Scout culture and way of dealing things is all about. In other settled cities and cantonments the interaction between the military and civilian is almost non existent especially in terms of sports.

We walked towards the army camp enroute we watched the making or rather erecting of aviation hangar it is quite a task and I wondered how this crane has been brought here quite a risk. Before the army camp I saw another wall about Tochi Scouts and I passed a comment that it must be something to do with Lieutenant Colonel Aashiq Hussain he seems to have done wonder here, mess, gardens and now this assault course, hats off to him. Army has made a monument and it is quite beautiful and well laid, the names are ever increasing and even now it is almost full, the dates of actions are not given only the rank, name and unit of deceased soldier and officer is given. I found the

name of a second lieutenant from Northern Light Infantry here he is the second subaltern to have died here in Waziristan the other one is Flury who died in June 1919. The army area has a traditional gate as well it seems that the army is here to stay and this will become a permanent cantonment. Area is open and barren all around , orchard has made by the engineer battalion and 8 Frontier Force battalion. We moved towards the Scouts area through a short cut and crossed the old strip, the college building in front and the mobile company's tower on the left and then through a narrow path which has a stinking air all around, the college building before its inauguration was occupied by the army and now I could see the soldiers bullet proof vests and rifles all stacked with the windows which had no glass rather army issued blankets were put for shade.

We entered the grid station but before that there is a vocational institution again under occupation of an army unit, Shah told me that American troops used to live here for short duration and that is why it is so highly secured, he further stated that no one was allowed to come here. At grid station entrance there was a bit chubby Punjabi Havildar and a young soldier, they were not sure what to do because we were such an odd couple Shah in his white kameez shalwar long beard and white cap on his head a typical miscreant dress code and I dressed in trouser and bush coat. They belonged to 36 Baloch Regiment the same regiment that has suffered casualties on 7th May incident I condoled with him and we both walked to the edge of the grid station there is a colony of half a dozen houses or quarters which are the property of WAPDA through a walkway having eucalyptus trees and a barbed wire , there were few children playing and it is criminal to call it playing because there was nothing to play with, these young toddlers were just rolling around , quite a number of hens also running around including a pair of rare Turkey, the natives have a very strong liking for the pets especially the fowls. The post is not that well laid as other Scouts posts but they have made a very fine green mosque on a raised ground , when we entered the compound one soldier was praying. I had a look at the area, the area on the north is the dry river bed and quite green there are few civilian houses all made of mud , in the near distant a colour full building which I thought must be a hospital but the local sentry told me it is a madrassah .

The post is well defended a mud wall with concertina wire then twenty metres of anti personal mines and then high concertina wire but these wires were broken, the post also has a video camera on the top which revolves around and there is a laptop which allows the operator to monitor the area the same footage is being observed in the divisional control room which I have not seen so far. There was occasional traffic on the periphery an odd motorcycle a four wheel drive and so on. The soldiers' at post have made a garden also and regarding the hens moving around they are the property of the family quarters.

On our way back we were invited by the canteen contractor Shah Rukh Khan who was sitting on the cemented water tank with another person and three children, I accepted his hospitality , the other person introduced after having my introduction as a person from inter services intelligence, he speaks Pashto and has served in aviation bases at Multan and Rawalpindi . Shah Rukh narrated the good old days when he could walk freely and entertained his guests his biggest regret was that under present circumstances it is very difficult to entertain a guest and this is a matter of disgrace for him. He told me how few years back none could talk even in a high tone to a stranger in the town because he was the guest of the town.

We moved forward and I saw a very cute little girl with golden hair and blue eyes she was just crying the way toddlers do but she reminded me of my daughter and I talked to her for few minutes caressing her hair and inquiring what has made her cry I wish I could have the sweets with me for such events.

On our way back I entered into the army public school or more precisely Scouts Public School, it is the efforts of Colonel Wajahat who was commandant in 2001-2003 and seeing is believing, a fine school with its own hostel for boys and other classes included nursery and play group apart from imparting study and education till class eight, it has a vast playing area with merry go round and slides. The boys were busy in playing cricket in fact that was the only game being played and there were no less than half a dozen pitches where game was being played. I watched in amusement and in my mind came back the Aitcheson College Lahore where I was the house master for a brief period. One boy who was bowling with left hand had a perfect bowling action and bowled quite well I will not be surprised to see him at international level in couple of years. This cricket is the major change in the culture and the most important factor in changing the outlook of the new generation, this is the binding factor. In the past the tribal children were more attracted towards the football and they still do in the World Cup time but cricket has taken over and with this the inherent hostility also diminished. I was told by the shah that daily students come from city they are dropped at the city gate away from the anti personal mines and for short period the passage is open and they walked in and similarly they goes back in the evening same holds true for lady teachers but I think I will carry out more research on the subject. There is another school on the opposite side of the road then there is the college which I mentioned before then another school Al Azhar which is opposite to the civil stadium so quite a number of educational institutions.

I met Major Zaheer from aviation on my way back he told me that they had gone in the morning to the Razmak to lift a casualty. I took him to the tennis court for a cup of tea after bidding good bye to Shah. At the tennis court I was approached by a bulky dark colour officer who as a matter of fact started asking me questions , where is your family how many children you have got how old are they, I do not mind these queries because this is typical army culture and when I asked him politely about his regiment so as to start any conversation but he was bit reluctant and then said I am from military intelligence and looking after the intelligence matter of the division and it acme to me as no surprise because somehow the other these intelligence officers have this false sense around them. They are absolutely useless in this area because majority of them are unable to speaks Pashto thus they are at loss but to make sure that they are taken seriously they have only ideas and plans to make the area peaceful and this colonel was no exception, he gain belongs to the category where glass is half empty to him there was corruption everywhere and none was sincere with the country, a theme which I have heard umpteen time and practically fed up with it but I listened to him and then gave counter arguments which with the help of historical evidence proves that nothing is as bad as it seems, the country is progressing despite all hardships and comparing to the regional anarchy we are rather lucky and fortunate to have a stable political system in place and soon we are heading for our general elections which is a mile stone. This area has its own historical and cultural values and they must be respected and should not be treated at par with city life and values and laws. The colonel had a plan to disarm all the tribesmen similar to United Kingdom pattern and I pointed out that in America you can buy weapon from the shopping mall similar to the pattern you buy a mobile phone.

Saturday 19th May 2012 .

It is a close holiday and spent the day in the room rather the suite, it is a four room set, one main sitting room with traditional sofa set a seven seater, it has French windows which gives almost a complete view of the lawn then a small room which is the dinning room with a small fridge it has also window, then a master bedroom a changing room and washroom, even washroom has a window and an exit. There are two split air conditioners and a wall mounted television. All doors are made of pure wood and same holds true for all other furniture, only the bed seems to be modern . The electric system I have not fully understood till now, there is a grid station which provides electricity on

timings then there is generator and finally urgent power system{UPS} and all the lights are linked with one or the other system, it at times happen that there is light in one room but there may be no light in the certain power sockets. There is a telephone in the room which I have used only for calling mess on number 136 and to ask for cup of tea in the morning.

In the evening went for a walk with Havildar Shah towards the monument as I wanted to check certain data from the names written there, on the way we stopped at the Shah Rukh Khan's canteen , nothing special other than the torches. I inquired about purchasing weapon from the market at Miranshah but Shah Rukh flatly declined of having any such contact probably he is apprehensive of my credentials I will try again.

We went to three different posts after walking through the Political Agent's colony. The colony is similar to many other such pattern colonies all over Pakistan. Houses small in size with distorted paint, an odd out of order truck, a small shop, few odd shops with little crowd, hens running around and children sitting idle, one particular boy was neat and clean with hair comb and surma in his eyes, I recall the days of Multan in 1992 when my wife used to dress my son every evening like this. The way to posts was most unusual and most unlike military, you have to follow the colony road and comes to a dead end in front of government degree college for women and then step down and follow the dirty stream and through narrow path and cross it while stepping on three stones and then climb up and you are standing next to what is called telephone exchange post, infact these are two posts the first one is what I mentioned just now and the other is almost adjacent and is known as Civil Works post.

The telephone exchange post is as the name indicates in the telephone exchange complex the post commander a Khattak from Karak received us, he was bit perplexed as to who am I but Havildar shah introduced me. Everyone comes and shakes hand some embraced and I had a look at the post, unlike other posts which are made in open and that of mud this one is in a built up area in a constructed building and as such most pathetic in layout. The scouts as usual had their kitchen established in one corner and accommodation in quite a number of rooms . The way to top is quite easy through well laid stair and on top of roof there are three firing spots there was a machine gun with rockets in one. I peered through the fox hole and post subedar narrated how the fire came on 7th May, they were fired upon by two RPG-7 rockets by the miscreants from the frontal narrow alley, 'they did not aimed it properly rather they fired with one hand in a general direction towards us ... the rockets went over us. We fired almost seven rockets on the buildings and over a thousand bullets' said the post commander. We stood on the parchment overlooking the street below, it was evening time and few shops were open and they deal with auto parts, a lone tribesman walked in a heavy dark colour kameez shalwar without any weapon. The houses or the buildings in front were all poked with gun fire, they all are hotels the auto mechanics who work here normally comes from Bannu and as such these are their residences. I noticed air conditioners in the buildings just one odd and that too of window type have not seen any split in bazar. On the other side I noticed a massive red brick construction going on and I was informed that this is the new market which is being constructed by the local chieftains, there is a conglomerate of four. I was surprised to see such construction going on in such a war torn town and that speaks for the facts itself, none is fool to put the money in any risky construction but the locals must have the knack that this is worth it. The bricks comes from Bannu daily, now that is interesting that army or for that matter the state can operate this kind of traffic only once a week by imposing curfew and on the other side these locals are moving freely day and night, now there is none on the road to check them the state is not visible on the streets it is only in this fortified compound.

We had cup of tea which is customary and then took leave the subedar came to see us off till the gate, something more about the telephone exchange it is in working condition shaving a capacity of 5000 lines out of which 4500 lines are working and there is no tapping of the phones. People from city comes daily for work whom the scouts know by face and are allowed to enter, any body desirous of rectifying his faulty number has to contact the line man from his area but none other than these linemen are allowed to enter the compound, I forgot to ask how they collect bills and what about the net working, for this I have to get in touch with some telephone exchange official.

This public works post is almost adjacent, almost four years ago three terrorist stormed in through a hole in the wall and occupied the building they were flushed out by the scouts which suffered casualties also. The colony which is next to it was opened by Premier Bhutto I was old by the another Khattak Post Commander, which I presumed was in 1973. Let me take you a bit in past, I met Major General Naseerullah Babar a former governor of Frontier Province and he narrated that how in 1973 he put forward the idea to Mr Bhutto that if our boundary runs to the Durand Line then we must have control of it also and that is how Mr Bhutto then made a whirlwind tour of all political agencies from Gilgit to Zhob, that period was also a high point of cold relations between Pakistan & Afghanistan.

I also observed the Boys College on whom none has any control but it is still operative and so is Girls College, I inquire how do these girls enter the compound and answer was that the Tochi Scouts have employed one female from Christian colony which physically checks the students and there is a scanner also but both are superfluous arrangements because when you look at the culture the fact is that here every thing is done on your own judgement, a soldier will not peep into a car which has a female passenger and in my these two visits towards this side I have not seen that female security staff. There is another post which is made by occupying two quarters I did not climb into that rather sat out on a chair and observed the people sitting at the far side of the wall.

Later we walked through another path which took us to the far side of the colony where a long ground more suitable for Polo because of its layout was having a proper football match in which one team was wearing a uniform also, the world famous team shirts like Manchester United and AEG were visible probably these were the popular shirts available in the market, I told Shah to sit and let's watch the game, the players were of varying age I noticed some old men too and then I realised how this colony has adjusted itself to being besieged by miscreants; it is through sports in normal circumstances the game might still have been played but not with this zeal because now there is no other outlet for majority of the men as they cannot take a risk of going out especially those working closely with military. The doctors are there which are working in the lone hospital of the town, there are two I believed and one of them lives in side the colony and goes out daily to hospital so does few sweepers. Later as we were walking back I saw two young girls playing outside their homes on the green patch, they have made a kind of doll house and one was working on putting some flowers in it and other a bit far was doing something with the expired medicines probably portraying a hospital. I had a look at the design of the doll house which was marked on the grass with stones, had a bit of conversation with girls and they were replying ok but then changed their tone when they saw the other people coming from the match area. On my way back I noticed that the grass around the Scouts monument has been mowed freshly.

Sunday 20th May 2012

Nothing unusual other than the fact that the breakfast had a aloo paratha which made me drowsy and it was with great difficulty that I managed to walk to Havildar Shah's barrack

and we both set out for a walk, I said lets go towards the runway for the reason that I thought I may be able to photograph the Cobras coming from the day's patrolling but they I think flew back. It was road operating day and there fore many Scouts have come back from the posts, it is a custom or tradition that the friends or the qaum makes a food for them which is usually meat cooked by them in the barracks, today I saw four such cooking going on in the barracks and Shah told me the background. Wonderful weather dark grey clouds, cool breeze and then light drizzle. Met the brigade commander of 103 Brigade and I thought of getting his viewpoint on the matter I made an appointment with him. Havildar Shah's relative is in the Butt Post and as such we decided to walk there, I took pictures while standing on the runway thus I can correlate all around because runway is aligned with north. The wheat is now getting wasted, the fields were thinly vegetated and we agreed that it is only that man who has to live on the outcome of this field and wheat who will work hard and not the military, Shah again remembered Colonel Ashiq Hussain for his efforts. The apricot trees are almost ripe and we plucked few, very nourishing and sweet another week and they will be ready if by that time the soldiers left anything on it.

I have been on this post before but today the post commander showed me the area , I actually saw the pillars of Durand Line at Ghulam Hasan and moving westward, The natives were playing cricket outside the wall, they were in trousers I saw two talibans carrying weapons with long hair and cap, many people were sitting on the green fields enjoying the weather. This used to be the Scouts post and we kept our firing range equipment here but for last six years this has become the taliban's post. The post soldiers all prayed at the Maghrib time the post has made a mosque as well a mud bricked room.

Later at night I had tea and food with Ali Abbas and our conversation turned to the heroes and why we need it, Ali said that a hero has to die young otherwise his heroship gets polluted with time with all kind of judgements passed, I absolutely agree with him. We talked about heroes, Captain Javed our course mate was one, so was M.M. Aalam the Pilot who shot down four Indian aircraft in 1965 War, Ali narrated an incident. ' I was in Karachi in the brigade in year 2001 and my brigade commander was full of nationalism, he decided that the chief guest for Independence Day celebrations will neither be the divisional commander nor the corps commander but the legendary M.M. Aalam , who came in his old Volkswagon and was well received he was the icon and every one was eager to shake hand with him , M.M. Aalam spoke about Mr Jinnah ' I have seen him in hell' and this was the end of his hero worship by the brigade commander. The point which Ali was highlighting was that a hero has to live up to the expectations and this is where the trap lies because as a human he can make an error, I quoted him Brigadier raheel Sehgal and the Captain Who later both felt down from that mantle. Brigadier Tariq Mahmood TM is the sole example who died the way a hero should die, I gave him the example of Captain Jawad Aslam Cheema who I feel was a hero in classic sense, height, figure and family wealth yet he opted for Siachen and died there in avalanche.

Tuesday Day 16th . 2345 hours.

Just came back from the farewell dinner for Colonel Aneeq the out going colonel staff of this division , he is going to Bahrain. Wonderful food only in terms of tikkas otherwise almost all military food have same taste, ice cream was an exception because it was handmade. In the day I went to 103 Brigade Headquarters, major Zamir gave me commandant's vehicle and I feel embarrassed for this , it is after years that I have sat in a cahuffer driven car, it had dark glasses and none checked us on our way to the division. It was difficult to find the 103 brigade , I

had not gone in the area before it is adjacent to the divisional artillery, I asked from few soldiers but all gave typical blank look, as compare to Scouts the army jawans apparently have confidence issue among themselves. I saw two tennis courts of the divisional artillery, frankly they are demoralising for the reason where as the Tochi Scouts have their courts made long time back the divisional artillery courts are recent production, the point is that this game is played only by the officers and it requires manpower to keep it in playing conditions and above all it requires soldiers to act as pickers thus it looks odd in operational area, a football ground or basketball court is the games that soldiers play in field conditions and officers must play with them to interact. Finally we found the 103 Brigade and instantly I sent back the vehicle. Colonel Mateen the deputy commander of the brigade as all operational brigades have colonels as the deputy is known to me accidentally, he is from 42 Punjab Regiment the very regiment with which I was attached in Siachen and we must have met there but I do not remember but he does. Colonel Sardar Sajjad other day rang me and said I can get in touch with Mateen for any hash etc and I rang Mateen yesterday and gave the reference and he invited me to come over for a cup of tea without understanding the purpose, thus was my aim of going there. But Mateen is not the type and he apologised for that but I made him comfortable and our conversation soon touched the favourite topic of finding the issue of Waziristan issue. Mateen is a Punjabi and as such favours ruthless use of force to settle the score. His version of Amin Post fiasco is different, according to him the Scouts never entered the compound and they are in league with locals and as such are reluctant to open fire, I took the Scouts side and said that four of their sepoy were also hit and even if we keep the Scouts aside what rationale you have for not using firepower on that day because the fact remains that the sepoy of 36 Baloch ran away despite you having six tanks and two Cobras. He said finally that it was miscoordination and somehow we could not fire back, the old saying that truth is the first victim of war seems true here as no one is accepting the responsibility of that fiasco and this blame game is just getting worse. Now if this is the situation with in a division over an operation which took just two miles away almost a fortnight ago then think of Pakistan – America relation ship over the war against terror.

I visited the clothing store again because Havildar Shah told me that they have something to show me. I met a subedar who happens to be the qaum commander of Marwat Qaum as well. A well disciplined person because he vacated the main seat for me and asked for tea or juice which I politely declined. The things which they wanted to show were nothing of interest an old bandolier, a web belt and two covers of Kukri. I asked the subedar to explain the qaum system and he highlighted that asa qaum they are collectively responsible for the misconduct of their any one soldier, any fine is payed collectively. The topic then broached the general situation and he was very upset over the media which has nothing else to show other than a pessimistic view of the country and this in his opinion was harmful for the new soldiers who are not getting the required dose of good things happening in the country , I fully agreed with him. The fact is that he is the second person after Havildar Shah who has raised the point of irresponsible commercial media playing with the emotions of people. This subeadr was very critical of the fact that the media is showing caricatures of head of state and prime minister and as such eroding the authority and the decorum of the office.

I had a lunch and then a nap after which my conscious pinched me for not writing anything today regarding the Tochi Scouts history.

I went to Ali Abbas room to inquire about the proposed visit to Razmak and he said tomorrow and then made arrangements for my stay as well. I told him that tonight they have Keema Kareelay in the dine out and we talked about how as young officers we used to look

forward to dinners in which general officers were also there. I inquired about newspaper and he also realised and call his attendant for this who replied that for last two days there is no newspaper and ali very politely said ok. I took Ali to the task and teasingly said that in good old days it was unthinkable that the newspaper has not been given to the general and he just smiled back, he asked whether I am coming to the dinner and since I did not received any invitation so I made an excuse that I will be taking the food in my room and came back. After five minutes I got a call from the divisional intelligence colonel who was sorry for not sending me the invitation and said it is on way and this is how I attended this dinner. I am made to sit on the main dinning table with the brigade commanders and they all seem to be very cordial and respectful, I am enjoying that typical phase of life where you are course mate of the general officer.

Ali very high of the out going colonel staff but then I think the way a hero should die young similarly these after dinner speeches should be short and crisp. Ali talk about the contribution of the colonel staff which were many but then he said that the division has made two guest rooms in the Peshawar and colonel staff's wife decorated that and in same good faith he highlighted that the staff house in Peshawar was also renovated by his wife. Now this looks perfect in a mess dine out where the lady is also present but here these very remarks have negative connotation among the officers who I am sure right now must be taking a hell of wordily fire on the colonel staff for his this performance. Ali is too humble in his words and now I think it is going too far because every time he says that I was not worthy of promotion which is absolutely incorrect, he has that qualities which have resulted in his becoming a general. What I like most about his speech was his view point regarding the Peoples Party which in his opinion is a progressive party and this country has to go about the life in a moderate manner, I am sure his remarks will be very effective in influencing the mind set of officers.

Tomorrow I am going to Razmak, luckily I met the Commandant of Shawal Rifles also he is from 53 Cavalry. Ali is adamant that he will go by road from Razmak to But staff officers are making sure that he should go by air, Ali wants to save the national resources but staff is thinking of his protection.

The first test match between England & West Indies have been won by England in an interesting manner, Chanderpaul is still a force to reckoned. Also saw the highlights of 1988 Seoul Olympics, Flo Jo was there with her smiling winning face.

Razmak, 24th May 2012, Wednesday

. 2030 hours.

Sitting in the room shivering with cold and waiting for the dinner which is at 2100 hours with Ali Abbass and commander 212 Brigade. John Masters was here and for last almost two decades I have ben visualising about this place, it was built starting from 1922 onwards and somewhere in 1935 the very first two ladies arrived here albeit in a disguise there footprints are preserved not more tha fifty yards from the room where I am staying.

We took off in the morning from Miran Shah at 1030, before that I just stood at the tarmac watching the helicopters getting ready for the mission, there were two Cobras which were parked in the hangar they were towed to the tarmac, one Bell 412 was getting ready, one Puma was there in which we had to travel. Major Zaheer was there so I asked him can I take snaps of the helicopter he was surprised and said 'sir why not'. Being myself an army aviator I knew that it is better to ask because any youngster can say 'why are you taking pictures it is not allowed', one has to be careful with army pilots they can stand up so establish their writ and command and tarmac is their jurisdiction. We walked towards the Cobras, Major Amrose a young pilot with a long beard happens to know me thus ice was broken and we had good conversation. The Cobras here are armed only with 750 rounds of cannon and no rockets or TOW missile, Cobra can carry 14 rockets and four TOWs apart from 750 rounds of 20 millimetres Gatling rounds. Major Amrose highlighted that since engines have gone old thus all Cobras cannot carry full arsenal, on my question of the techniques which they are using, the answer was vague, they fly at 3000 feet above ground level {AGL} and engage targets once they are told either earlier or through radio in air, but seldom they pick and engage targets at their own, the zooming power of Cobras is about 13 times more than naked eye. It was quite hot and warm.

I moved to Puma with Major Zaheer, this Puma is different from old Pumas, they were initially made for the UAE forces and were given to Pakistan by them. Zaheer briefed me that this model has 300 horsepower more than the old versions and like all pilots he was full of praise about this machine the instruments it has and he also narrated me the one accident which Puma had a couple of years ago at Tarbels where on take off it just sank and hit the ground and spin around but luckily none of the occupant was injured the one fatal casualty was the subedar who was standing outside and was hit by the flying debris of the shear away tail rotor. Meanwhile another helicopter approached a Bell 412 and as it came closer Zaheer said from the approach I can make out it is Major Omar Mehdi Warraich, I have not met Omar for last five years and was excited to see him, by the time he switched off our doors were closed but he came and I stepped out to embrace him it was really very pleasant to see him, he is Cobra pilot and angry young man of his decade.

We took off with major General Ali Abbas who looked like a real field commander with weapon strapped around his thigh, colonel staff and two brigade commanders. I was keen to see the area and as we flew south the area on my right was the Boya Fort and Spin Khaisora where the very first Victoria Cross of Tochi Scouts was awarded, the general lay out of the country is quite a mix one dry river beds, numerous ravines all confluence, mud villages scattered around the banks of these water channels, occasional green patch and then the country start elevating, thin forests, ridge lines with their centuries old tracks, greenery which resembles the area around Desoai plains but with less menacing mountains, if one is not aware of the militant culture of the area then it looks picturesque and a tourist spot, the word little Switzerland comes into mind. The Razmak bowl is a kind of flat surface a bit of plateau but not in true sense because it is surrounded by mountains of gradual slope yet it is more or less like a long wide ridge. The elevation is 6666 feet AGL. It was nostalgic in nature, I recalled Bugles & Tiger of John Masters where he described of Razmak in 1935 it was known as Little London with its building and lay out. All around from the helipad which is there in the middle of the sports ground the view of the valley is fabulous, on the south is South Waziristan the water channel just below the Razmak is the dividing line between the North & South Waziristan, Cobra and Bell 412 provided the cover by clearing the adjacent heights which in any case are occupied by the army regiments. I was taken to the brigade headquarters of 212, this brigade was in Lahore and came here last year. Another surprise was there Major Afzal who was junior at 5 Squadron Skardu and we served together for well over year and half is the DQ here. He took me in his

office and made a number of calls to make sure that my stay here is comfortable arranging for room installing telephones and making sure that I have an attendant to look after me all typical of him, I was feeling embarrassed for all this protocol as I do not deserve any of this, I am not here on official purpose and being retired none of this is authorised to me but this is army culture and more importantly this is how old comrades look after you if you have been fair with them in your official capacity. Major Afzal rang the Commandant shahwal Scouts and informed him that I am course mate of the GOC which he already knew and therefore he should detail a person who should take me around, I wanted to interrupt Afzal over this because it can offend the Commandant but it was too late. Later Major Afzal drove me to the Commandants office en route we made an halt at the view point which is just outside the gate which links the cadet college to the Shawal Rifles. View is good, cadet College has been shifted to Nowshehra and all their accommodation is now lying vacant or occupied by the army units.

There was a rush of young school boys coming up from the public school which the Rifles are running now. Boys in kameez shalwar light blue in colour shouting and joking with each other and climbing up, I saw young girls among them so the school is co education, girls of seven years of age clad in the light blue kameez shalwar carrying books in a bag and wrapped in a hijab were chatting with the boys, there was a girl in yellow colour shalwar kameez also, it reminds one of childhood, it was very refreshing and heart warming to see so many students getting education and this is the single most major contribution of Frontier Corps in resolving the conflict and creating an atmosphere for future.

Commandant Shawal Rifles was very hospitable and courteous he narrated how he is changing the outlook of the setup which sounds quite monotonous as in military almost every one is giving the impression as nothing much was done before him this is again a part of military culture. I was put into the custody of the Subedar major of the Rifles a Khatak Patahn and another subedar who is now part of the band of the SR.

We four now walked the fourth one was the official photographer of the Rifles, Major Afzal left after making last minute arrangements for my stay. We walked through the narrow streets of the Razmak, on both sides were the old barracks of bygone days. Iron roof tops which are slanted because it snows heavily here, The SM told me that it is unusual to have such a hot day as today otherwise by this time it rains. Fruit laden trees paved footpaths and frequent sign boards indicating where a missile has been hit in recent years almost every tree and every building had the same markings. We first went to the library and I went through the books nothing extraordinary yet I found a magazine Balahisar of 1994 which had an article on Tochi Scouts history. From there we walked down and first saw the military transport shed built in the early days of Razmak, on the other side were isolated huts and long barracks some in living shapes other declared dangerous all had corrugated roof tops, stone walls some plastered but majority left as they were, signs of demolished buildings, area is littered with trees and over all green, the view all around is good air fresh and crisp, the road in pretty good condition with stony footpath and drainage. I was taken to the Ali masjid which was hit by a rocket last year and now under repair, it is imambargah of the Rifles as well. From there we walked to the edge of the fort, the Razmak is not a classic fort rather it has a boundary wall which has been fortified and height increased and decreased over the years. Now we were in the eastern edge and all huts were in deplorable conditions. Razmak after its glory period remained vacant till 1970 when it was under the Khassadars who were a native force and much of its deterioration took place then mainly because of lack of funds for maintenance. This in any case is the living area of followers the Christian sweeper colony. I inquired about the old Church and I was taken to a hut which had the sign of the Shawal Church with a proper cross and name of pastor as well, I asked the subedar to get the permission for

our entrance and we walked in , a heavy dog was having siesta under the tree and two men came out from the huts and I shook hands , the church is not the genuine old rather a new one so I left. The SM told me that it has been renovated by the present commandant and on Christmas Commandant and other officers come here and take food with the Christians , this is not only impressive but heartening also. We reached the barren outskirts of the eastern boundary wall and stood under a tree and just absorbed the area . SM narrated me the rockets that have been fired the last one came yesterday. The band Subedar told me that there used to be a distillery here at the eastern edge, he also said that he once found a gold murti which was taken by the senior many many years ago, he also indicated building rather a hut which was an Hindu Mandir but not any more as there are no more any hindus here.

There is an old post just on the north eastern periphery of the Razmak Garrison, the striking part of it is that it has underground pathway, now there is a road but still the troops use the old path. The SM then took me to show the water supply system of the Razmak, on the way when I pointed out to the old huts and also said that probably more huts were there and have perished , he narrated how just yesterday they found an old grenade of 1936 and also that a year ago they while digging new buildings foundation they found a cache of 260 hand grenades which later were destroyed, the water reservoirs are covered with sheets as they were in pioneer days, there are two water tanks which were clean and water absolutely crystal clear they clean these tanks after every three months, now they have their own tube well but the old water pipe lines are still in working conditions with their old markings, water is drawn from the mountains and drawn over miles. We then drove to rather we first walked to the outer perimeter where they have their firing range , the runway is just within a stone throw distance where a local shepherd was herding his flock of sheep and few cattle, this was the first time since my arrival in Waziristan that I have been outside the fence and was bit apprehensive but SM asked me whether I want to go till the end of runway and I nodded in affirmation and he then told the photographer to go and fetch the vehicle and meanwhile he narrated the life pattern that the Shawal Rifles have gone since 2001.

Initially we were having excellent relations with the natives, The Mahsuds live just close by rather the river or nullah is the boundary, we used to attend their marriages, funerals and invited them on sports functions and other events , we used to shop in the bazar and at Makin the heart of Mahsud which lies just twelve miles south of Razmak rather behind that ridge line in the south he pointed out, in 2005 the relations started deteriorating and it reached its apex in 2007 when no less than 1900 rockets were fired on the Razmak from the adjoining mountains day and night, on eid in 2007 we fasted the whole month with nothing but lentils as there was no supply none had the cigarettes and even we ran out of naswar, on eid we did not have any sweets to celebrate believe me sahib. The people who were working here and living outside in the country side were threatened and many were slaughtered for working in the Scouts, but none of the men deserted except one odd. Meanwhile the double cabin came and he sat on the driving seat and we drove towards the northern end , he further highlighted that these villages on the periphery are friendly these are the summer abode of Wazirs who have started arriving as he indicated a truck at one of the village, these people or the Wazirs are not that hostile as the Mahsuds . The band subedar narrated how the Premier Bhutto came here in 1974 and landed here at this spot there was a huge gathering of the people and somebody fired in air and then more firing and Scouts in apprehension for his safety wanted to take evasive measures but Bhutto stopped and went to the people and promised them electricity and school and all of sudden the mood of people changed, he was highlighting the effectiveness of a politician in understanding the people, the SM then narrated that how President General Musharraf came few years ago and there was a local Jirga assembled for him and one of the Malik got up and said how I accept that you are the

head of state if you cannot provide electricity, incidentally the Bhutto promised was never fulfilled in totality and Musharraf was dumbfounded and it was the governor who got up and said we will provide the electricity and open up hotels provided you guarantee that there will be no fire and weapons will not be carried and malik replied I cannot and governor said till then the president also cannot guarantee the electricity, how far is this true I cannot comment but the point was my initiating the discussion by saying that the political agent and politicians are the best means to combat this menace and these were their comments.

We reached the northern post , a tower like building with iron and steel gates and similar structure protruding out from four corners at mid height to allow the sentries to observe and fire, all around are well dug trenches which were not there in past but have been made now for extra protection. Beyond the northern end where stood a high mountain lies Datta Khel. The post commander took us around and SM pointed out to a large mud complex with iron gate and said this is the house of a nephew or grandson of Faqir of Ipi, it is on the northern edge of the village, the whole village composed of mud compounds and houses was absolutely quiet and there was no movement what so ever, weather fine and air fresh and crispy. We were offered Rooh Afza which was not that cold. It is a different feelings to stand in the Wazirs country knowing fully well that any time a rocket can come from any direction. All the adjoining peaks are under occupation by either army or the Shawal Rifles. SM also showed me the Alexandria Picquet which is there on the northern ridge, he further narrated that they used to walk to Miran Shah on foot and it used to take a day and almost half day to Datta Khel, beyond Alexandria lies Gardei and Dossali posts.

As we were driving back a group of young boys numbering around ten in which two were carrying weapons with long hair and caps were walking across the strip, the SM made me wise by saying that they are friendly but now every one is in the Taliban dress code of long hair with a cap and weapon in hand. I looked at those young men with amazement as one watches lions on a jungle safari not knowing when they will get furious. Later we walked back and I inquired from the SM whether he is living with his family and he nodded in affirmation and I glanced at my watch it was three o'clock so I just cut the tour short and despite protests from SM send him forcibly to have lunch with his family and my self went to mess and in my room which was the first one and void of any curtains, ordered a cup of tea and ashtray, the attendant which Major Afzal had detailed came and then I also sent him back to the unit as I really did not need him the mess waiter was enough. After lying down and thinking of John Masters his initial days in the mess also of Major William of Gilgit Rebellion fame, the first ladies which came here in 1935 and things related to them I decided to search the mess and later found that there is no mess library and thus I went for a walk on the clues of the John Masters. I first entered the present governor annexe where the foot prints of two ladies are preserved in a glass covered mosaic with adjacent markings. The corner of this annexe is being pulled down which I later learnt to make room for a monument. Grape vines dry and a neglected lawn yet the cemented marking made for guard of honour and flag post, almost all head of states at least of Pakistan starting from General Zia have been here and this was the place where some even stayed otherwise the governor used to spent few days of summer here . I ventured towards the rear of the annexe and found a large garden with a tree in the centre the sun room is now a neglected gymnasium but offers a good view of the whole building, probably this is the oldest structure standing with a functional layout. The adjacent rooms which in past were used by the governor's entourage now occupied by 212 Brigade staff have familiar layout with the washroom bulging in the rear with its own door for sweeper, this layout was there at Cherat also and also in Rawalpindi there are also other buildings made of similar design but with concrete stone blocks and thus are of a later date.

Commandant's house is a fine building with brass insignias of the Shawal Rifles on both gates the sentry on the duty was rather suspicious of my taking pictures of the area but remained quite, I went till the end of the street and keenly observed the house on both sides, the house next to commandant is that of the wing commander and the house opposite was without any marking but had a sun room on the top, all the houses have iron sheets sloping, plenty of green trees of all kinds but majority of them are fruit bearing, the street has a white wooden gate at the end and I just sat there to see the vast open spaces, I noticed a plaque on the side wall and I went closer it was a recent one almost three years old marking the inauguration of something by the previous commandant's wife but now it was rather dilapidated. In Scouts there is no tradition of any thing being inaugurated by a lady it is absolutely against their customs and this one was some daring lady probably her husband was like majority of army officers too scared to say no to her{ I myself falls into that category}. I walked back introduced myself to the sentry had his picture taken which he readily and with pleasant manners agree, majority of the scouts and rifles soldiers are too happy with camera. I took a different route and went through the lane opposite commandants house, the lonely street had plenty of greenery and huts were white washed the house belonged to the DAA & QMG or in short quartermaster, the round took me back to the mess and I descended down and reached the same library which I visited couple of hours ago.

A lone scout was going and I asked him can he tell the librarian to please come here and he happily nodded, these scouts are a much cordial and cooperative and more efficient than the army chaps that is my personal observation. In the meanwhile I just sat on the side wall and try to absorb the surroundings, what was this building which is information room before, what was behind it, how was the life here almost 75 years ago. In front of me there was a she dog playing with her three puppies and my mind raced back five years ago when at Skardu I had carried out an experiment of rearing a wild puppy which turned out to be a female and gave nine pups after a year and meanwhile I had captured another pup which also grew up and thus after year and half I had almost twenty pups and grown up dogs including many lovers of that first female roaming around my mountainous house. Another scout was taking care of his garden, majority of the scouts at Tochi and here also are fond of gardening and this an excellent way of passing time positively. Meanwhile the same photographer came and said he is in fact looking after the library also. The walls of this soldiers school in which this library is established had quite an array of quotes painted, one deals with the status of mother, other highlighting the importance of education and another giving and highlighting the indication of downfall of man and nations and one of the leading cause was when man will listen and obey his wife more than his parents. I had a good time in the library and found few magazines and books dealing with my research on Tochi Scouts. To avoid drowsiness I had avoided lunch but now I was feeling starved and this was making me drowsy. Another soldier came and sat with me and I came to know that photographer had gone to fetch me a cold drink in this state of empty stomach I was in no mood to have a cold drink so I said to this soldier lets go to the café if you have one here and have samosas, which he agreed. I did not had a single penny in my pocket but I knew in any case he will never let me pay for it. His name was Imran an Afridi from Khyber Agency, we both walked and he narrated me something about the area but in my empty stomach state I was not listening to any thing.

These two scouts were trying their utmost to be as hospitable as they can running around, I was now understanding the proverbial hospitality of patahns and more specifically the scouts. I went with him despite his feeble protests inside the dark café which was frying the samosas and putting them into a bowl with salad, the other scout the photographer in the meanwhile had grabbed a whole bench for me and I said firmly that I will not sit on the bench rather I took them to the green part of the open lawn in front and sat on the grass, the photographer was in line waiting for the samosas and

Imran and I had a conversation. He asked me how many children I do have and hearing that I have to he replied he had four. He then said his younger daughter of ten months has a cardiac problem with a hole in her heart and it is quite depressing but God will be kind. We watched a volleyball game being played in near distance, there were three guns of Shawal Rifles deployed right in front of us, Imran said before this insurgency one required the permission of the inspector general of the corps to fire even a single round but now any observer or soldier can call for artillery fire and when 130 mm gun fires the roof shakes and debris starts falling. After the samosas which were good the photographer beg leave and myself and Imran had a tour of the area. He pointed to one of the house which had red roof and broken walls that this used to be the residence of officers but now the displaced people are living here. Many of the scouts were living in the nearby villages and quite a number of them were slaughtered by the Mahsuds in order to cause the desertion among the scouts but they have failed and commandant has allowed many such families to live inside the camp. Imran also narrated how from 2007 onwards the things went wrong and how now every hut and barrack has a dug out for protection against the falling rockets. I gave my point of view that we are loyal to our constitution and to our regiments and this is our honour. I have found that instead of touching religion the best way is to stay loyal to the constitution of the country and to the regiment which we belonged and this is precisely what was the cardinal or centre of gravity in the British era. We walked for long time going through the hospital which is as it was decades ago and all military hospitals have similar layout, good flower beds and neat and clean walls, patients were playing something which I do not recall now, may be it was badminton. We also went to the auditorium which has the marking of 1932 and Queen Victoria's Own. This is the only building left with any British marking here there is another hut which has the year 1922 written on it. In all military buildings all over the Pakistan the British had the wisdom to write the year of construction with cement in a round circle, it is there at Karachi in army aviation squadron mess and adjoining houses, in Lahore in Peshawar in Quetta every where but it is only at Miran Shah and at Razmak that this aspect over the years has been neglected. There are number of mosques four to be precise here. All over one comes across stray dogs moving around but these dogs are very beautiful typical mountainous and winter bred. Imran told me that these are Powindah's dogs which are off shoots of their parents doings they roam around here and fed upon the cook house left overs and as such are totally harmless. It was pray times so I bid farewell to him and thanked him for his hospitality and reminded him about the books which he had to deliver me in the morning on a loan voucher.

I had a look at the mess lawn and the first thing which caught my eye was the tennis court and the badminton court, it seems that tennis is the official and traditional game of the officers of frontier corps. A row of trees with the plaques in front of them recording the date and person who planted it, the very tree is planted by General Zia Ul Haq in 1978 and next one not in chronological manner was the bearing the name of Qayyum Sher Mahsud the deputy of Frontier Corps, he was my base commander at Multan a fine senior. I noticed the sentry taking off his shoes in the tennis court he placed his rifle in front of him and then sat down to take off his shoes and offered his prayers. The change of uniform at least in Scouts have failed to undertake the fact that all scouts pray come what may, and with old dress which had only chappals as foot wear it was simple and quick and now these shoes are time consuming and requires the person to sit in order to remove them. Many a times we have failed to understand the cultural aspects in our desire to be modern and western looking, this change of uniform of the scouts is the biggest blunder that has been made in the name of efficiency without taking into account the real facts, the reality is that shoes take more time to wear and take off as compare to the chappals more over they create smell in feet due to socks, chappals on the other hand is local and quick, regarding the efficiency it should not be forgotten that all the natives since

British era have been wearing and fighting them with these chappals and they have the battle record to prove the efficiency of these chappals.

Major Afzal as per his promise was there and we sat outside, sorry I have mixed up, I was sitting in the room writing the very first line when came the Colonel Staff Colonel Riaz and we sat for some time, he had spent his youth in the Cadet College Razmak way back in 1980 and now he said I am going to the college to rekindle my old memories, I have started liking his intellect and now I understood why Ali got him on choice with him, I was under the impression that Ali abbass is staying the night in the Razmak and as such made a mental note of taking shower in his suite because in my room there was no warm water and in any case it seems embarrassing to confess to any young officers that I need warm water with Ali it is ok.

I reached the dinning hall at nine sharp one of the few rare times in my life when I have been able to make it in time, the mess is generally okay not as wonderful as Tochi Mess, no old pictures no visitor book no books, few silver items , one tank replica which was very in thing in mid eighties when it was first made and presented to General Zia by the Armoured Corps Centre , a gun replica, an odd dagger the most eye catching item is a brass samovar, the mess it self is in layers with Television room a few steps down, a corridor linked the main ante room to a bigger hall which I believe in actual design was meant to be either a dancing hall or banquet hall. I just mark the steps when Major Afzal came in and informed me that the officers are sitting outside and there they were the colonel staff the brigade major the staff captain and another officer which I learnt later is the deputy commander of the brigade, they all rose and I shook hand and took seat , this is quite an exercise because it is their courtesy that they rise otherwise they are not supposed to do so for a retired officer especially if he is junior to them in retiring rank but then this is what makes Pakistan Army so unique and special , my gratitude to them. Later the brigade commander Brigadier Babar and Commandant Shawal Rifles also join in and after some time Brigadier Babar complained of the chill and we moved inside, I occupied a side sofa and just remained on listening end, the initial conversation among them was regarding the Indian Premier League and Babar was especially praising Dhoni for his innings and the way he hit a Yorker for a six he showed with his wrist movement that how difficult it is to do so, the young ones then came out with all sorts of records and data to show the calibre of Dhoni and the latest rules regarding the teams for reaching finals. It is cricket which is the binding factor between Pakistan and India and also England, it is also the only time and subject on which a junior can differ with a senior in military especially in Pakistan Army. The Commandants of both Tochi and Shawal Scouts are quite a fan of cricket and they have been spreading it to these remote corners as well. The other topic was the forthcoming Volley Ball tournament between the scouts and the army. Mess Havildar came saluted and informed that dinner is ready this is also quite a drill. I thought Ali is taking food in the room unlike of him but I kept quite. The talk on the dinning table was casual and Babar seems to be well informed about the area, he narrated how he met Bait Ullah Mahsud in 2006 as a lieutenant colonel, I inquired about the physical features of Mahsud and he said that he is around mid thirty , normal height and slim body frame with a beard. Food taste was same as in any army mess. Colonel riazat narrated how when he visited Razmak in 2004 for a college reunion , he saw next to Alexandria Post the big writing on mountains with white lime on stones that Mullah Omar is our leader and Babar agreed and narrated his experience of similar pattern. Babar being a Punjabi has that sublime hate for Mahsuds and for all these tribes who considered themselves invincible, he is not alone in this feeling because almost all Punjabi officers and men have same mind set, I also had the same idea when I was in army and it is only while travelling and living among them that I change my thoughts yet it is difficult for any army personal to think that any one tribe or area can defy the power of military or army. Another issue that was broached on the dinning table in connection with the invincibility of

tribes was their history and how they helped British in their rule, Brigadier Babar gave the example of Fort Munro where the treaty of Baloch Sardars with British is preserved in the shape of seven direction figure then somebody puts in the name of Tiwanas and other, I remained silent because to correct the history on a dinning table with a host without having the support of my course mate Major General Ali was fatal. The history which army officers have read and understood or taught is very basic and not analytical rather it is stuff which is published in digests of commercial stuff. I at one time shared the same beliefs but now I see it in different perspective, the tacit support of tribes to British should not be construed as treason rather as part of forward policy further more on the same yard stick almost all of our national heroes falls into similar allegations because they all went to England for education and remained on the pay roll of them as government servants either as lawyers, judges, teachers and military personals. This crisis of identity are not unusual as all similar nations which have got freedom or so called independence which in any case was nothing more than transfer of power are at odds as to whom they should call traitor and whom as freedom fighter. The easy targets are the tribes especially the Baloch and political big names of Punjab who remained in opposition to Mr Jinnah thus opposing the political thought and policy of Mr Jinnah has become a symbol of treason. The case of Dr Afridi also came under discussion who was sentenced for thirty years for helping Americans to catch Osama, almost all the officers were of the opinion that Americans will take him out. The officers entirely follow what the mind set of the senior is and Babar was anti American anti Benazir Bhutto, I think anti is bit strong he was naïve. This pattern I have seen and have been a part of it where the political ideas of a senior are adopted by the junior officers in these mess talks which in any case are prohibited by army rules but they are there. When a senior officer makes fun of the head of state and the institutions then one can expect little mental grooming of juniors. The proper way is to do so in a professional manner where the ideas and current affairs are dealt in a mature manner but these passing remarks are dangerous. It was only after dinner that I came to know that Ali is staying the night with 11 Frontier Force on the post

Afzal and myself went for a walk we sat at the view point and watched the sky full of stars and the surroundings, the posts all around were well lit and even the tracks leading to them were bright with light it seems as one is sitting in Islamabad and looking at the Minal Restaurant, I do not find any wisdom in so much of brightness because even if any Mahsud who is coming for an attack on these posts can hardly lost his way. Afzal told me that today a Schweizer helicopter has crashed at Rahwali killing Major Zahid Bari and another student while they were flying over the river Chenab at low level. Later we had a cup of tae in the mess and he further narrated his flying experiences , it was very refreshing to hear and talk about flying after so many years, Major Afzal is one of those pilots who fly by the rules and as such have survived although we both had narrow misses in the aviation school, he is simple and very efficient.

When I slept I had my wife in my dreams and my children as well. Night was peaceful and no rocket fire. Next day I had a tour of the area with Commandant Colonel..... he took me around and we climbed to the top of the post close to the helipad it is under construction. Commandant is simple and trying to create some kind of history but in that process the real history and heritage of Razmak is getting obscure , he has named the streets and blocks after the pattern of Islamabad thus his office is in F Sector and Mess is in G sector it quite confusing.

Puma came at 1100 hours and before that Ali had arrived in his jeep, very kind of him that he received me with an embrace and stood up; he picked his own small bag over his shoulder and the young officers had looks of admiration. This seems trivial in over all context of military life but in our military culture even these natural things have lot of implication where senior officers seldom carry their own diary even. I intentionally sat in a way to have a view of the area from the different angle

then the one which I had while coming towards Razmak. Not much of change in the scenery, barren mountains with green patches mud tracks going and linking the valleys over and through the streams and dry beds of numerous ravines. Population mostly on the dry beds it is clear that at one time it was a flourishing civilisation as long as there was water flowing but now there seems to be scarce cultivation, an odd car running around other than that there seems to be little change in them in all these centuries. Miran Shah itself is the centre of all the communication and trade hub, the town is spread over the wide banks of the Tochi River which is mostly dry.

We arrived and landed safely back to the Miran Shah from where Ali went to his office and I had a talk with Major Zaheer who is flying to Bannu thus I gave him my camera to take aerial pictures of Mir Ali and also that of Miran Shah. I went to the waiting room at the tarmac where there were no less than sixteen aviators, eight from Cobra, two from Puma and rest Mi- 17, the Cobra crew is being changed today and I just sat there listening to their talks and jokes, only one officer Major....knew me then another Major Musharraf came from 4 Squadron my old squadron. I just tried to find old faces among this new cream of army, I could see my old friends and characters among them, in flying cover all they all look same they talk in same language they crack same jokes their cribs are similar to what I have been listening and cribbing my self for two decades, I knew what is going on in their minds. My ears were catching various noises, someone was narrating his solo experience how he got away with the forced landing other explaining to another the intricacies of an altimeter. Like good ole days the flight commander had gone to the division to get the claims signed and now the mission was waiting for him, constant telephone ringing and getting weather, few were talking in Pashto others in urdu mixed with English I just there for an hour enjoying this humming of aviators full of laughter. Lieutenant Colonel Riffat commanding an Azad Kashmir Regiment was sitting next to me and we did not talk a word but then he ran out of cigarettes and I offered him the last one and we started talking, he is from Bunji and I told him about my thesis and luckily he had met few survivors of the 1947 living in his area and we exchanged numbers.

I then went to the Tochi offices on foot and was offered lift by the regimental police riding a motor bike which I gladly accepted, later I briefed Lieutenant Colonel Tariq regarding my visit. Major Zamir also came, they are having volley ball tournament or match and he was quite excited about this. A thunderstorm came in the evening, I just slept and thought about the history. In the late I went to Ali's room sat there for some time and shared his food. Later met Major Zaheer and he narrated the mission which he undertook two days ago when at Peshawar they were informed about the two casualties at Timurgarh where two soldiers while carrying out mine laying operation had accidentally blown themselves thus aviation or Major zaheer planned the mission sitting under the helicopter and by the time they reached the spot it was dark and they had to carry out night flying in the mountains, Zaheer explained that since there is no mountain or obstacles between Malakand and Peshawar thus he was comfortable at 3500 feet other than that he was critical of the way helicopters have been utilised, he disliked the fact that helicopter was used for the dining out of the colonel staff to fetch the brigade commanders from Razmak, he was appreciative of Ali Abbas that he carried his own bag at Patch Ziarat and commented that this is the way the senior should behave and conduct.

Late at night I took him to Tariq's residence and we had food there, by and large the conversation despite my best efforts still flung towards the politics and the pathetic situation in which our country is in, the sad part is that this conversation or remarks are without any solid substance and mainly based upon idealism.

Friday. 25th May 2012.

Went to the Political Agents office straight to record office where Amin was sitting there, in the agency offices one comes across men attired in traditional dress with long flowing Pagri and one is reminded of the excitement which early British settlers must have gone through ,presently knowing fully well their tribal past and culture the feeling and apprehension remains the same, in one of these days I am going to approach them sit with them and just listen to their talk which I can understand little bit.

Went for along walk with Havildar Shah towards the north eastern edge of the perimeter towards the College Post, the post commander was a Bhittani who was very hospitable and helpful, we walked towards the last post held by a Afridi Subedar as post commander, I walked out of the gate with him and a guard for few steps, in front is Machis Village, a seminary in front with student boys standing, a mud hut shop and regular flow of one odd car and motorbike. Bullet from a sniper expected anytime yet as an officer although retired I cannot just walk back or show that fear so just stood there and I was watched with same intent by those boys as my dress was different.

Saturday 26th May. Brunch in the morning, same taste , Ali gave a little talk to the officers on the professionalism which I apparently think will make no difference at all on any of us.

In the evening went for walk with Major Zaheer and Havildar Shah, it was first opportunity for Zaheer to be so close to the troops and see the town from the post, he got engaged into a theological and idealistic approach and debate with the post wallahs, nothing unusual as almost every one of the officer from army on his first contact and visit or trip thinks that he has the perfect remedy for this problem. The troops need motivation and when you get yourself into a debate of theological substance than it can be harmful for instance Zaheer raised the issue that our constitution is unislamic therefore we must follow the quran and our government is corrupt, I cannot take this beyond this thus I had to interfere and said it firmly that it is Islamic and there is a shariat court and federal court as well, the regimentation is the last word for us and we as soldiers must only obey the orders and should not think beyond that. The post commander a Turi from Kurram was himself quite philosophical about the end result. One common result which I have deduced is that almost all are questioning that why army is not striking at the militants, according to Turi subedar it has lowered the standing of army, he also narrated that they are under orders not to interfere with Haqqani group as it is carrying activities inside Afghanistan only. I raised the issue of friendly casualties and tried to make them understood why we are not taking on militants, although I myself is not clear about this yet I cannot let the troops get astray in mindless thoughts about why it is not being done, as soldiers one needs to keep the brain almost empty.

Similar queries in the evening in the mess lawn by young aviators whom I praised for flying Cobra, their point of view was not much different from what I or majority of young aviators had, to think and debate something beyond our rank structures. I had pleasant talk with these young pilots my theme was that state is there to look into the matters and your task is to fly and hunt the militants and this you should enjoy and do not think that what will happen when these Cobras will get old and you there will be no spares.

Sunday 27th May. Met the commandant and gave him a brief and enjoyable talk at his residence, quite regal and majestic yet serene, as he came to see me off at his gate he casually mentioned something about hashish and laughingly said that intelligence here has to be supreme otherwise these people will sell us in the Miranshah bazar. I nodded in agreement.

In the evening I sat outside on a bench and tried to write when Zaheer came, they had gone to Razmak from there to Bannu and Peshawar and back, they have the freedom to travel which we do not, there was a humming noise in the air and Zaheer said it is Drone and I did not know it before and we talked about drone attacks for sometimes. Later at night I saw on television that a drone attack has been carried out at Mir Ali killing four.

Monday. 0845 hours. I better start getting ready for PA office, let's see what they have to say about drone attack.

2030 hours. England is just one run short of winning the second test also, cricket is a good past time much better than watching and listening to the non stop pessimistic views aired on channels all predicting a collapse of country.

Day was good, at the agency I searched through files and files and found the original border and administrative report of 1896, 1930 and 1942 apart from going through or scanning a whole history of the agency and the frontier region. There are files on the film censorship dating 1952 onwards highlighting long lists of the films available and approved for screening. There are instructions on the censorship giving the exact sentence and scene to be deleted. One example is about a dialogue of Aslam Pervaiz which has been deleted in which he says that 'I do not believe in the god sitting up, he is only god for the rich' in another a scene is to be deleted where the camera has shot a heroine purely from her buttocks, in another a bathing scene is deleted. Our media has often been critical of censorship as against the creativity but the hard fact is that media is a pure commercial venture but sole aim of making money irrespective of the cultural consequences, a sentence about god can take thousand lives in a night here in frontier. I also saw the old newspaper of 1953 in which Governor General Ghulam Mohammad is tipped to be the first president after the approval of the constitution, in another news the Pakistani Premier has dubbed that relationships with India cannot be friendly unless the Kashmir and canal water dispute is resolved, at least one issue is solved that of canal water. There were lists of closed holidays to be observed in 1954 and new year and easter were gazetted close holidays then apart from Juma tul Wida. In another letter dated 1948 January the correct nomenclature of addressing Quaid I Azam is given in details. In some of the old letters there was one correspondence between the political agent and a firm in Bombay for the purchase of second hand liveries for the poor employees of the agency. There are files on the irrigation and forestry improvement in the agency, an advertisement for special short commission in army, another for recruits with height of five feet six inches with an education of three classes. Petition by the locals for construction of houses and gates. Report on the education standards of the agency there were over two thousand rupees of stipends for the students, there was one student from Miran Shah who went to Australia to attend a conference. Hospital works, fines on tribes and their agreements signed with thumb impressions, the 1939 fair in Miran Shah when a merry go around was first introduced and tribes went wild with fun ultimately it broke down due to sheer weight of the men.

I was sitting on the mat scanning the files when a tribal man of around sixty with a beard and heavy turban came in, he was sitting outside when I walk in so I was pleasantly surprised to see him, he had three papers in his hand one original and two photo copies of the same. He spoke in Pashto and handed over the papers to me and I could make out that he wants me to write something on it. It was an application in which this syed was asking for monetary help in lieu of one Kalashnikov and two rifles which he claimed were destroyed on 11th May incident in the bazar. I was in a hopeless situation and I called Amin clerk and he came and said that this old man wants you to write favourable remarks on this before he put up to assistant political agent, the old man by virtue of my trouser thought that I am an official and this is what he conveyed me through his Pashto. I wrote

one sentence ‘ I do not know this man but I have to write it so please look after him’ and that man shook my hand and gladly went away came back after five minutes and insisting that one line is less I should write three lines and I did, and he walked away gladly .

My laptop is still unable to connect to a wireless connection. In the evening Havildar Shah came with another Havildar and I ordered three cup of tea for all of us. Talk generally moved around Faqir of Ipi and faqir of shewa . I said that present situation is no different from the 1930s and then gave a general run down of the situation then and now with very precise selection of words, my aim was to inculcate the loyalty towards the constitution of the country and presenting this war not as a religious conflict but between those who believe in the rule of constitution and those who does not. Khattak asked me rather painted a scene that if his wife or sister elopes away with another man then he would rather look into the circumstances which permitted this close contact. The tea came in at this precise moment so I was spared the answer. He seems rather educated and bit open minded although he confirmed that he is part of tablighi movement. Coming back to his question I painted another scene , for instance you are going on a journey and the bus meets an accident and your sister, mother, wife or daughter sustains injuries and nearest lady hospital is two hundred miles so what will you do, will you let them die or being operated by a male doctor. I painted another scenario in which mother is suffering from breast cancer and only a male doctor is qualified to carry out the operation. He enjoyed my scenarios and laughed. His next query was regarding the adultery, his point was that there is punishment for forced adultery but now they relaxed the conditions for consensus adultery which in his opinion was and is against the Islamic law. I said that those who made these laws are educated people and thus we must trust them in this case also. Further in my arguments I said rather he came up with the narrative that what about the female slaves of early Islamic era in which sexual contact was made with them and he was wondering whether that falls into adultery and I agreed that it logically is but then the life and laws have taken new dimensions with passage of time, for instance the slavery is abolished and more than that I show him that where as in the Battle of Ditch the Holy prophet {pbuh} elected to have a ditch we today preferred a wall around the Miran Shah camp because this is what suits us now more than the ditch. Thus in pure classic terms we have deviated from the original Islamic concept of warfare but then this is the liberty given in the religion, he agreed smilingly.

While telling them the historical background of the Tochi Scouts I said few good words about the British Officers ‘ they were able to command respect because they were also able to read or people of book. This he differed and I reminded him that when Muslims were being persecuted then it was King of Abyssinia Najashi who gave asylum to Muslims so how can we as a nation forget their kindness , it is against the culture of tribal society, he enjoyed this example the most. He narrated an event where in one of the books he had read that some religious scholar mentioned that if you even touch a woman then your wazoo is broken and in next breath he said that where as another religious scholar has objected to this by highlighting that in case if you touch a woman who is holding a child and you are picking that child away from your sister and so on.

Later he remarked that almost seventy percent of people of England are atheist and they have no moral values. I gave him personal example of my stay in the Glasgow University where I saw huge crowds of people attending the church, I told him that I have been regular visitor to the Church & Gurdwara, I explained the concept of nuns and he asked me why they are called sisters and what is the difference between them and the sisters of hospital. I narrated him how the soldiers till 1850 had no proper medical look after in the field and many died due to poor medical and sanitation conditions , the Florence Nightingale worked for them and this is how the Red Cross started. I further highlighted that look at the sisters or the nurses working in hospital looking after our parents and children washing them dressing them giving them medicine which in majority of the cases even we may be unable to do

so there fore out of sheer respect for their noble work they are called sisters. Naik Khattak asked me when I came back from America and I replied just few months ago, he was inquisitive about the security check in which women has to go through a scanner and termed it a violation of modesty. I narrated him an in incident how a woman in hijab was checked by American female police and why it is necessary for security, right here in this Miran shah in 1919 a gang of six men were able to over power the sentry by pretending two of them as women clad in burqa, I further said that 'will you allow a women wearing a veil and totally covered in burqa to enter the Miran Shah complex from civil gate and he said no. My point was that security is not a violation of modesty or a religious beliefs but a necessity of time, and it is only the present time which has made us realised that we cannot allow a woman without scanning. His other query was regarding whether in foreign countries Muslims are allowed to built mosques and I said yes , in United Kingdom the number of mosques in 1947 were fifteen and now over three hundred as far as France is concerned it may be different but in England and America Muslims have complete religious independence as much as we have in Kurram Agency where every day there is some incident of religious instigation and entry of certain religious preachers is banned from time to time.

Khattak & Shah enjoyed this discussion and after some times we bid farewell . Now at this time there is a dinner going on in the Mess by the divisional staff , I do not know the occasion but since my course mate Ali Abbas is not here , he has gone to Peshawar to attend the promotion board so I have not been invited. Today I asked about Laiq shah a prominent historian of the area who has written a volouminous book on Waziristan in Pashto, I had this book with for last wto weeks and was thinking to call him because he lives in the city but when I inquired in the agency office, the Clerk Amin after asking from his next seat clerk duly informed me that Laiq Shah died two weeks ago.

Tuesday 29th May 2012. 2315 hours

The power is off but generator is on, tonight aviators gave a dinner in which they invited Tochi Commandant and wing commander apart from assistant political agent so was I, in fact I gave this proposal to Major Zaheer last week to interact with the divisional staff and Tochi scouts reason being that I never saw any aviator not even the flight commander being invited on any party which to me is quite strange because an aviator is the one officer whom the whole division should Knows and whose coordination and participation is vital for the success of any operation. While writing the Royal Air observation Post I after going again and again through the draft realised that pilots ego and way of working is different and he either is too extrovert or too introvert depending upon his flying grooming thus he has to be approached and then he will mix up with the officers, all my commanding officers especially Lieutenant Colonel Azam always used to stress that as a pilot one must go and meet all the divisional staff so it was passing on that to new generation. Good food especially the sweet dish Rabri excellent. Green tea under a starlit night with humming noise of drones flying overhead ends the day.

My day at political agency was good went through certain old files. The government officials in 1933 were not allowed to attend any farewell entertainment without permission from deputy commissioner. In 1961 Niaz Ali khan the nephew of famous faqir of ipi was the medium of conduct and contact between the political agent and the tribes thus he was on the payroll of the government to counter the Afghan propaganda for Pakhtoonistan, he was supplied with money and propaganda material apart from rations to woe the tribes. In June 1961 the government imposed duty on Timber and tribes threatened to assemble at Razmak on 1st july and on 30th June government took back the decision and averted a fight, thus political soloution remains the best way to ensure peace here. In 1960- 61 census the population of Wazir Tribe was 91239, Dauris 58328 and saidgi 5040. Wazir have three main sections namely Ibrahim Khel, Wali Khel and Mohmit Khel. The Ibrahim Khel has three

sub divisions namely Madda Khel settled in Datta Khel where the area is known as Madda Khel even on map. Manzai Khel they reside in Kanirogha, Mannirogh, in summer they migrate to shuidar and mazdak, shuidar is the area abeam the runway at Razmak. The third subsection is Tori khel the hardest and most turbulent they live in lower portion of Khaisora valley upto Kaikowan at the south of Shaktu and aroundabout MirAli and Sherstallah plains they also migrate to Razmak in summer.

Daur they live along the banks of the River tochi they are regarded as the most advanced tribe mainly agriculturist , there area is from pai Khel to khajauri except the Hamzoni area which is the name given to tribes occupying the area between Boya and darpa Khel. Saidgi are not to be taken seriously the old men who met me yesterday asking to write something on his application was a Saidgi.

Another observation about the litigation is that Wazirs seldoms settle their scores through litigation rather they do it in their own way but daurs are quite into litigation system, generally Wazirs are poor anddaurs are rich, the original owner of the fertile lands were Wazirs who sold their land to daurs and later it were daurs who were robbed and attacked by the Wazirs thus they the Daur asked for British protection this is how the British were able to make an ingrees here. Powindahs in 1960 were stoped from entering into Pakistan for the reason that their presence would increase the price of basic commodity at Miran Shah the simple equation of supply and demands as a result the files indicate that many powindahs lost their lives due to harsh weather in Laghari Wara area near Miran Shah. Electricity came to Miran shah in 1961 and it was hoped that it will hasten the speed of civilisation . There were four civil hospitals twelve dispenseries and four veterinary hospitals in the agency apart from five Tochi Scouts hospitals at Miran Shah , Boya, Mir Ali, Khajauri and Spinwam. 6100 animals were treated in the year, there was one donkey stallion, one stud stallion and ten stud bulls and 119 rams studs in the agency. The rams won second and third prize in the national horse and cattle show . In 1960-61 under the basic democracy there were ten members elected from Miran Shah and six from Mir Ali. Malik Jahangir Khan a Wazir from Madda Khel was elected for provincial assembly and Malik Daryaa Khan a Wazir Tori Khel for national assembly but he is from South Waziristan, the Daur member Subedar Akbar Khan's papers were rejected thus the honour of being the pioneer parliamentarians goes to these tribal leaders. The movies that were not given censor certificate in the year included Expresso bongo, La Vierter, David & Goliath, Town without pity, Girl Fever, Baghdad after midnight; majority for nudity and some of the urdu films were based upon their socialist dialogues and other on religious reasons like the Private lives of Adam & Eve.

I later left the office and went to Tochi Scouts offices had cup of tea rather juice with Commandant he is always very courteous. Later had a nap in which I remembered my children when they were toddlers nad I could hear their voices.

In the evening went for a walk with Major Zaheer and talked about Osama, Shakeel Afridi and NATO supply routes, he generally agreed with my observation that in army the officers by and large do not think logically about these events rather they go with the mind set of the senior, I in my arguments highlighted that if only the foreign office is left to decide these issues then they can always get a good bargain but there is always a solution to all present issues but only if tackled logically and not emotionally. Osama bin Laden raid was no doubt a violation of our sovereignty but before that we were so goody good with the American having lunches and dinner parties and giving away presents on farewell which Zaheer agreed and added that yes same was the pattern at Tarbela , so where we or our relations went wrong, the answer lies in Osama, but we have acted as Osama was not our enemy rather a friend, if American did not shared the information then purely from military mind one can accept the logic because even in army at times data is not shared with others so in the end the

operation proved successful. To my mind we should have stick with the idea and propaganda that we have provided the information and have helped in making it successful and in lieu cash the good deeds because in the end it is the commercial gains which matter. Now the hard reality is that liberals and moderates have lost or are on the run and hardliners are dictating the foreign policy because no one is allowed or is even willing to put forward the other side of the story and there are always two side of a coin. Here we are now in an economic mess because we cannot afford the cost of these military operations which in any case are being conducted as a result of Osama hunt. Today none is remembering General Musharaff but only few years ago there was none to say any word contrary to his policies thus army as a thumb rule simply follows the line of the chief which is a good thing and it should be like this but then chief is bound to follow the political leadership which he seldom does. General Aslam Beg in 1990 Gulf War went against the policy of Nawaz Shariff and resultantly every coalition partner got its loan written off except Pakistan. The world also works and live the same way the way these tribes are living, Dauris were weak so they called in the support of the Government, Wazirs as a whole are not that hostile but if one clans commit a crime then the others looks after their own interest first.

Visited the Pakistan Air Force radar setup within Miran Shah a MPDR 45 type, the weather hot and the corporal who took us inside had to first vacate the radar because four other air force soldiers were lying on a mat playing cards with air-conditioned on and chairs being kept out. They showed us the screen and there were six drones in the air and he said at night the strength increase to even twelve, now this is something strange on one hand military especially the army is shrieking about these drones but on the other hand own air force is silent about these, thus this is creating confusion among masses and the political government has to bear the brunt of these allegations from so called patriots. Visited 149 artillery regiment and got the briefing on their deployment, they are moving to Bahawalpur after a stay of two years here. The two young officers Capatin Adeel and the other whose name I am forgetting now explained how they have devised new and practical methods to conduct shoots here, I appreciated their work and narrated how my generation saw the Afghan War but certainly yours is more lucky to have such a wonderful combat experience here. It is times like this which actually makes a regiment an regiment in pure sense. Men and officers sharing the hardships and good times the ever constant threat and fear of Wazirs is something which removes all kind of laxity and casualness among the officers and troops. It is easy to talk in mess lawn with a cup of tea about war but this is reality the first real war that this army has fought since birth, in which there is no Geneva Convention to bank upon no mercy from the opponent and no conspiracy theories for failure although America remains the easy scapegoat for any eventually.

After dinner no few words about the dinner itself, the Commandant is an icon of courtesy at least for me and I am getting deeper and deeper into debt of paying back to Tochi Scouts and this is a worry matter for me. He is naïve about aviation and as such he was inquisitive about how the helicopters work and there was no dearth of technical flow of knowledge from aviators especially Major Zaheer, the discussion ranged to Osama and wisely I remained silent and on listening end, as a thumb rule a retired officer should avoid making any comment which are contrary to the expression of a senior especially in front of juniors on topics like this. I appreciated the sweet dish and after dinner when again discussion went on to lament the social fibre of the country I just gave facts and figures which shows that our education standards has improved in last decade, I highlighted the fact that in 1953 a boy from Miran Shah went to Australia for a study tour.

Tomorrow Major zaheer has given me an offer to fly with them towards data Khel and Boya area they are taking some mineral research team there lets hope I can make it in time for it.

31st May 2012, 1505 hours.

I did not go with Zaheer yesterday because I slept and I cursed myself all day for this lapse, he in any case went and then flew to Razmak to pick up casualties that occurred due to IED. I spent the day reading old books and typing.

Today I have changed my guest room now I am in number four, I did not sleep all night because in the morning the Tochi School had its parents day and I did not want to miss it due to sleep. The days of my life when I have been able to make good use of time are rare and everytime I curse myself for missing the innocent beauty of early day. I sat out on bench and just stare at the grass the birds fluttering around few pigeons roaming scot free, a pair of mallards were running inside cage which is good enough for their sprint and cross country races. The voices of the birds in this part of day were given the background music by a thumping generator but it was just the background base but otherwise these various kinds of birds chat so much among themselves that one feels like sitting in a Scottish pub on a week end night. I do not remember their names and types but they were everyday type of birds only more plentiful.

Later I walked to the school for which I took the path behind the mess which follows in front of commandant house and then after twenty paces turns left and then right, in front of the mud barracks and onto the main avenue of fort where you take a right turn and walk almost a hundred paces or less and you are out of the fort, this is the original path which runs in a longitudinal manner, there are two such paths the other is almost parallel to it but with a gap of hundred paces, the hospital is located on that path. The path which I have just followed was the RAF path and their area, the present commandant house was the pilots mess in 1923. This seems to be the extension of the original mud fort of Militia in from 1900 onwards.

There was guard on the gates of the school there were two boys with arm band receiving the guests, I had a chat with them, last time I had such an occasion was at Aitchison College Lahore as a teacher and house master. I was met by the Naik Khattak the one who came to my room few days back, shook hands with him and other teachers and sat in the principal office which was the waiting and control room also. A native boy with a bouquet of flowers was sitting there, I said hello and he was studying in class three the other boy was almost double his age was in class one. I did not ask any question over this as this is how it works here, at times the parents realise quite late that after all there is nothing wrong in education. Meanwhile a girl of eight years old entered confidently she was in blue kurta and white shalwar with a scarf which she very smartly kept on taking care. She or Kashf as her name is charming and beautiful, I was keen to see the native children as how they look like and what they think. I said hello to her and asked the usual question about her class, she replied and telephone rang which the boy answered and another teacher entered and then moulvi sahib. I kept my conversation with her but it was difficult so I invited her to sit on next to me. She had a lovely voice and what a pleasure it is to hear urdu from a Waziri girl it is similar to a Scottish girl speaking English. She is in class three, likes mathematics as nothing is difficult you only have to work hard. I was in a trance I was fulfilling my quench of love which I have for my own daughter. She did not like to paint she answered on my question, but why? inquired, sir, she answered me all the time by the prefix of sir, I made one but when I tried to rub it the paper was torn so I left it. Who is your best friend was my next query, she named a girl who is studying in class fifth. How many girls are in your class I asked, only myself came the reply. I was baffled but kept quiet. I saw you other day in the colony, she said. Oh the day they were playing football I replied and feeling a bit important now, no the cricket she replied. You like cricket, no came the reply. All her sentences start with sir and had

the imperfect grammar which was making it a treat to listen. I told her that I saw two girls playing outside their houses on that day and Kashf said, she must be my sister. Now it is against the manners to ask a child what her father does and how many brothers and sisters she have. I cannot speak Pashto I confessed to her, what you can speak Pashto she was surprised, you are better off than me as you can talk in urdu I said. I do not exactly recall but I asked her whether her brother is also studying here or something like that and she said as a matter of fact that I do not have any brother but we are six sisters. Now it was my turn to get surprise but I took it as a matter of fact as she was taking it. Do you have any younger sister and she said she had three, I hope they are not teasing you, no no they are lovely but sometimes I get angry with them. I am sure your elder sisters also get angry with you, no they are lovely too. My elder sister is studying in Bannu and when ever we go there she gets sad when we leave. Do you watch television, sometimes but the other day storm got our dish down and we have only one channel. My father works very hard, he goes to office then comes back have his food and prayers and then goes back to work, I write one page and my hand gets tired but he writes and writes but never gets tired even now he must be working. It was time to leave but I had fallen in love with this charming little princesses I wish that she keeps on talking and I keep on listening, in her I was talking to my daughter.

The programme itself quiet enjoyable and thought provoking, the boys recited quite a couplets from Iqbal in peculiar Pashto accent which makes it even more enjoyable. A welcome speech in Urdu and then in English, few skits the most impressive was the one which five girls presented. It is hard to believe that here in Miran Shah the heart of insurgency there is this school where the girls are studying with boys although they numbered only seven odd now. This is the first line of defence against illiteracy and extremism, had there been no Tochi Scouts School then all of these students were potential suicide bombers and even now there are half a dozen seminaries running around the town producing minds devoid of thinking anything else but only one dimension of life.

There were generous gifts for almost everyone for every position they gave almost two gifts and through this they have won the hearts and minds of the people, this is why militia and scouts are the most important key players in turning the tide of violence. Commandant Colonel Wajahat was sitting next to me rather it is the other way around and he whispered that I should also give gifts and awards but I regretted, kind of him. Later he spoke about the school, Tochi Scouts is running the school purely on its own resources, over 500 students are paying nominal fees and boarding is almost free on top of all this almost twenty orphan children are getting free education and messing, hearing and witnessing all this makes any Pakistani proud.

Major Zaheer has left and Lieutenant Colonel Salahuddin is the new crew of Puma, last time I saw him he was young and so was I. He has been to United Arab Emirates for training and getting instructor rating on the Puma. Later Brigadier Khalil Dar also came in he has not yet taken over the command of Qasim Base. Myself and Dar has quite a long association mainly revolving around history, military history and adventure. His wife happens to be the very first teacher of my son Salik in Quetta. Dar was commanding officer of the 9 Squadron at Peshawar in 2002 and later remained in Military Operations Directorate dealing with the area and as such is an eye witness of all that is happening now. He is also the very first officer whom I have met at least here who is logical in understanding the present scenario and does not believe in any conspiracy theories thus it was quite educative. The 7 Division actually came here in 2004 mainly for the reason of ensuring non intervention by the tribes in the Afghan election of Hamid Karzai, they then got stuck here like British. Another brigade 217 probably has arrived from Kharian and if I go by the history then similar pattern was adopted by the British in 1920 when units and regiments came from plains of Punjab on emergency without any prior training of hill warfare and suffered badly. Later British opened up

special Frontier Warfare schools at three places in India, Abbottabad was also one such place. The difference between the Frontier Corps or Tochi Scouts and army is starking in this area, in the morning the Tochi Scouts were able to show their support for the locals and vice versa, for army there is no such opportunity but in near future there will be many . Brigadier Dar also made a point to write an account of the war, his one point needs attention , he highlighted that for long we have been admitting and presenting with pride the fact that local manufacturing of weapons is of very high standards and wonders where that weaponry is going now. He termed the relation ship between army and locals as superfluous , army does not need permission and good will of locals to move about on road and the day army is able to dominate the bazar and surrounding areas that will be the first sign of victory; I agree with him.

2100 hours. There is a dinner of 7 Division about to start, I have not been invited, you never know all of sudden Colonel Staff remembers; I am comfortable here but I am missing sweet dish of rabri. General Ali is back but I have not been able to call on him, his presence is certainly a source of comfort , I have to give him the cheque.

1955 hours, 15th of Moon

Sitting in the mess lawn enjoying a glass of cold lemonade and listening to the chirping voices of multiple birds , few seconds ago a crow was yelling I am not sure whether he was male asking for food or the female cutting crow's ego by highlighting that is this all you have earned today. In the far distant two romantic sounds of newly wed couple birds, then a more romantic voice of some one bidding good night to each other, another one lamenting the destiny for getting stuck up with alousy bird like you on such a lousy part of tree. These are free birds and there are birds in the cage which have no worry, they get best food and living enviroinment, neat and clean nest, a man paid by the stae looks after them , who is better off then the free oones struggling to make a nest of their own all the time living in a persistent danger of being shot by a friendly or wayward shell or the ones in the confinement. Same is the acse of human . Living inside the fort is like the birds in a cage.

I have finished my glass of chilled lemonade, it is something very traditional to military messes, a glass or jug of it while sitting in the lawn is a perfect end to a day, only the mosquitoes are the irritant. This mess is apparently home to bats and ababeel, they fly very low and fast just like new pilots. There is silence except the that bird couple which is still fighting over petty issue. No moon so far , yesterday it was full moon and where I am sitting the angle was good because by this time the moon would be peeping through the lone tree astride the main mess entrance , however if I change my position and go back few steps and sit on the bench then it was high up, at midnight when I came out of my room and sat at the bench to stare at him, he was high and lone , its glowing golden light and corona had engulfed the whole sky diminishing the stars. I stared it for long and through him I had a glance through my own life, I recalled when I saw it in Thailand on a far island in 1989, then the Skardu, Siachin, K-2 , Glasgow , Harrisonburg, Sargodha. So many people rather to be specific so many women associated with it, where are they now.

Boya Days

Nothing very exciting has happened in last few days and I am getting rather feeling embarrass for being here because the same querries by so many officers, where is your family, don't you miss them, what you do for living, when are you going home, are you still here, I hope yoyu are staying till

next week. And so on. I just smiles back as long as Colonel Wajahat is not asking me this kind of questions everything is fine.

I did not had a good sleep rather nothing, there was a constant rattling of machine gun fire which started around 0140 hours, its sound while sitting in the room sounds quite pleasant, there was a long burst then a small burst and then single round fire which I think the soldier was enjoying doing so. It is a routine matter on Saturday nights, see how it differs from the Saturday nights at Glasgow university club. The reason for firing on Saturday is that since Sunday is a road operating day thus the miscreants normally try to plant improvised explosive devises {IED} or lay ambush thus any movement seen at night is fired to keep the roads safe. It happened last Saturday as well and the intensity was more than today. However today or tonight my worry was that this may be an indication of something more drastic on Sunday. I could hear the telephonic rumbling of Ali Abbas. I have no idea at what time I dosed off but I was up at 0600 hours because I had opted to go for Boya, small fort close to Datta Khel near Durand Line with the road convoy.

Had two glasses of lemonade and then again slept and awoke for umpteen times. I was not knowing at what time the convoy leaves, received a call from the NCO of 5 Wing which is located at Boya to inform me that the convoy will be leaving soon. I packed my stuff rather Afsar Khan had already done that. I wrote a note for Commandant which he is interested in having a historic note on the wall. Before leaving I wrote a note for Ali Abbas thanking him for lending me the lap top and also warning him that his laptop is no more an innocent and pious laptop rather I have taken him through a tour of dark alleys of the world so he better be careful. The vehicle was a single acbin Toyota the Scouts came to pick up my ruck sack but I carried it my self, in the vehicle was one rocket launcher, one machine gun and two more scouts with SMG's. The dilemma was that they all were wearing the bullet proof jacket and helmet and I was unarmed and had no such armour protection ,wering my bush jacket and felt hat. I felt vulnerable and truly understood the meaning of phrase unarmed into battle which was the title of official history of air observation post. Once the vehicle moved and left the Northern Gate and took right turn covered a distance of hundred yards and at the wstern gate there was traffic jam yes a traffic jam, because a convoy from Bannu has just arrived and its military trucks were anxious to make way. It looks like a Baddami Bagh Bus Stand with trucks crawling, few civilian trucks standing on one side and my driver keen to make his way through the chaos, military police was apparently helpless in this situation this was obnoxious, I told the driver how vulnerable we are now , a single rocket from Taliban can play hell with us. We moved forward and there were further scenes of chaos, a soldier bending with a sack on his back , another throwing a last moment water bottle to the truck, few soldiers laughing majority silent with anticipation of future so was i. Over all the army discipline was poor in this matter no officer seen around. Finally we left the protective umbrella and acme out on the open road, the very corner whicjh I saw first time from the fort where a woman was wearing a bright coloured shirt and I had wondered who are these people now I was among them.

The road operating day is quite elaborate and what I have gathered from all the meetings and talk the gist is as under. A curfew is imposed in the city and in the area as well none is allowed to come out of the house and anyone seen is shot. Picquets are placed which are scouts who occupy the important key points with their vehicles and soldiers placed who normally stand behind a cover. In terms of Miran shah for instance Captain Hammad & Hamza would occupy the two petrol stations at the eastern and western end. A bomb disposal team in which a soldier from engineers walk on foot and physically clear the area he has another vehicle behind him carrying jammers on board, on suspect another soldier wearing a suit carry out disarming of the explosives, hats off to this leading soldier he has nerves of a lion to do al this. The IED's are placed in different manners. These IED's

are made of urea the one used as fertilizers for crops, it is boiled and the segments left in the base are then made compact with flour and then bolts nuts nails are placed along with a circuit which is either timed or through remote control or by pressure. So it is very easy to make very lethal in nature and can be placed either by digging the road or in a shopping bag placed innocuously. On every road there are incidents of IED blasting and casualty. Last week one blast took place at Bannu where IED was placed in a wall, in Razmak area one was planted in a tree. The one at Bannu was a masterpiece because the Taliban had challenged that they are placing one and you will not be able to locate it. The transmission of army and Taliban is intercepted by both as both are transmitting in air. The Taliban's interception are often quite amusing in which they will brush off the artillery fire as non-effective. I knew about this procedure only in detail yesterday and now my eyes were on the road trying to find any shopping bag.

We crossed the bridge and were on our way to Boya, driver was driving as he is in a formula race and was duly admonished by the scouts standing in the rear to slow down a bit, now this vehicle became the leading vehicle and I got further worried because now we will be the first target. Road was good with occasional humps, speed breakers and pot holes all potential sites of IED's my breath was slow and so was heart beat. All around the area is full of ambush sites, on my right till Boya the mountains cover the site and on left the Tochi River with green patches in between the road and the dry river bed. The very first village is... a mud cluster of houses with towers we passed through the village and any one can hit us. I saw small children playing and watching us through the walls they waved to us and so did I, a bit of tension was eased. I started conversation with the driver he is Yousafzai from Mardan area. He asked about myself and I replied back. I have worked for an actress as a driver in Lahores. Now this changed the whole spectrum of this fearful journey. He also said that he had driven a van for a mohajir in Karachi but then situation came to a point where that mohajir said to him that in case if you are taken away by the Mohajirs I would not be able to help so is you in other cases it's better if you leave.

We crossed another speed breaker and my mind said now let's give up in calculating where all IEDs can be planted because every place is full of these sites. There were shopping bags, there was an old woman walking with two donkeys, children playing in the field, waving, a man lying on a charpoy under a tree. All shops were closed, all gates were closed, there was another picket two jeeps and soldiers standing, one odd sitting carrying water cooler and again I thought of water bottle. There was a soldier standing with flag but flag was in a bad condition.

Tochi River runs parallel and on both sides are mud villages of small size, some of the compounds were huge with towers, one had a tower almost like military tower. Trees of all kinds and almost invariably all are fruit trees. The water channels running, the primitive hand well in the open gives the look of most primitive era. Scenery invariably draws a comparison to travelling in extreme north in Karakorum and Himalayas. From Skardu towards Shigar onwards Ashkole. Here the river bed is full of stones another evidence of glacial era. On the other side which is almost 5 kilometres or slightly less the scene is similar green oasis and mud huts. At no stage the river width narrows down to an extent that you can wave to one another. On the road we zigged zagged. A graveyard with old stony graves one had a flag fluttering around most probably a recent grave of a Taliban who had died fighting. There was an advertisement for a school in which the most economical education is imparted. All signs were in Urdu. Another picket and then we stopped to drop and pick someone a soldier. I was just thinking about our vulnerability/ Driver asked me if I would like to stretch and I said no I am fine but I insisted and came out in open. Took a few steps in front was the Tochi River and the mud town of Boya. From this point a track diverges towards Gharlamai and for Afghanistan and also the town of Deezgan the stronghold of Taliban. The old bridge runs parallel but is broken

conditions. The valley narrows down like a funnel/ All green I was briefed about all the posts on the peaks . We sat and drove crossed the bridge and took right turn , now river comes on our right there is water in it but not much but what is there is clean and fresh. The bed cannot be crossed without a bridge. I wondered why the advancing parties do not walk through the centre of Tochi River it is bit rough but it is safest because you cannot be ambushed. Boya fort has two walls one outer inside which is quite a large ground in which family quarters are also there and then an inner cordon where 1954 is written on the top it was burnt down in 1947 when military and scouts withdrew and then reoccupied in 1948. Brick built in 1957. Met all the scouts shook hand and guided through a narrow alley when Capatin hammad came out , he had reached earlier. The residence is very comfortable cool neat and well decorated. Wing commander and his family had left in the morning convoy and hats off to thee military wives for braving such risks when even male officers are very reluctant to even come to Miran Sha even for a night stay and here these women and children have come out as far as Boya.

House is elongated with a verandah in front which is made flyproof with a small rather reasonable lawn in front, cricket bats and badminton rackets were placed in one corner. There are two rooms on each side of a hall with comparatively high roofs which is wooden. First room on the left is in disposal of hammad, the opposite room being locked as it must be the wing commander's personal room, then another room on left which is television set and leather sofa set with table. Mine is opposite to it a small room with one window, a wooden almirah, a wooden bed two side tables two wooden sofas and two plastic chairs and a plastic centre table, an attached bath with blue tiles. From the window the only scene is of that Musa Khan Post.

There is another lawn in the rear with vegetables, a cat sleeping lazily but gave me a stare, few pigeons fluttering around. Later we both were invited for tea and chicken roast with Mountain Dew cold drink, I hate this drink but had to swallow it down. We both came and sat in lawn and Hammad narrated how he won the first prize in military debates at Risalpur. The time he was conducting officer with Turkish delegation at Karachi with Natasha & Salima both lieutenants in Turkish navy, the very scene when a lieutenant colonel came to meet these lieutenants after a day of flirting wearing tuxedo and that too with a hat which he took off at the table with a style' my ladies I am here and then sat down took a cigar from his pocket and smoke'. Later we all youngsters used to go to him always complimenting him on his dress code and he would be flattered and ordering the special tea breaks and in the end we would get the job done. One time our commanding officer and commanding officer of another signal unit had somewhat bad relations adding back to the sports match that took place between their units when both were adjutants and now they revived the rivalry to an extent that both almost punched each other during a match between their regiments, we were ordered not to dine with the opposing unit and neither to have any social contacts with them.

At night we watched the French Open finals between Nadal & Djokovic, Hammad is a keen follower and good player himself, we had the dinner and went to bed early, this is the beauty of Boya.

Monday 0900 Hours.

Having a cup of tea which is cold and I have just requested the Mamun the attendant to get it warm, none of his fault because I told him twenty minutes ago and then I went out to have a look at the fort wearing khaki shorts white shirt and chappals the old Scouts dress. The fort is small, the old fort which was built in 1906 onwards was burnt in 1947 and the post was vacated, it was reoccupied in 1957 and rebuilt, in 1958 it was attacked by the tribal lashkar in which one of the Subedar of Tochi Scouts was awarded SJ and again in 1966 another SJ was awarded, but very little is known about these operations even in Tochi Scouts and one of the chief reasons for coming here is to see first hand the area and to know about those operations through oral history. I have requested the SM to locate

the old people in the village and in the morning he said he will do so and there are men over 80 years of age. Canteen is small and a kind of subsidiary of the main canteen at Miran Shah. Hamad is a very good company, he is captain with just three years of service he was promoted captain in March. So I am living a subaltern life through him, he is still asleep.

Around Boya, and Boya is a small valley the ground opens up here like a broad funnel and then closes down. The surrounding peaks are all having Scouts posts, for instance The Musa Khan post is over looking Boya from North and Zomani Post from South. On my query that how you supply water to them the procedure is that 14 men are living there and every morning a team of two donkeys take the water carriers and follow a track, along that track there are small posts for protection also, the men come down daily for taking a shower in the river which is between the Boya Fort and the hill on which Mus Khan Post is located. The post is quite high and provides cover to the Boya Fort in case Fort is over run or comes under fire. It was built during British Era. The Oral History narrates that Musa Khan was a shepherd and post is named after him it needs further elaboration.

Weather is hot but there is air in the air which makes it pleasant. The house in which we are living is the residence of Wing Commander and is nicely decorated and comfortable. Washrooms are tiled and floors carpeted, there are two lawns one in front and other in back, there are no less than three than three dish receivers and power supply is for few hours in which I recharge my lap top as well. Over all area is dusty, there is a detachment of air defence also here with four Shoulder fired SAMs all reaction of Salala Check Post. The usual squadron of pigeons is also present and are carrying out their routine flights. The odd cock is also loitering around.

1500 hours. Wind is blowing strong outside from the window I can see the north in front of my eyes there is a tree and in high distance the Musa Khan Post, a wall intervenes which was built by last wing commander Lt Col Gulam Hussain before that it was all open and only the original fort built in 1957 stood. This fort is not the original fort built in 1905 a mud cladded compound with watch towers, the one which I mentioned on the track or road coming from miran shah. It gives help in reducing the time of rescue. Anyway I went to the tehsil office which is another mudcladded compound. With me was the subedar Riaz a Waziri and WHM we walked to the gate of own fort and I thought that it is the first time I will be going out, lets see it is too late and too absurd to think now, I had no weapon but I was wearing the white kameez shalwar and chapplas. In the morning I walked around the fort in traditional summer dress of scouts which was khaki shorts and chappals with white shirt, Subedar Riaz whom I met along with Subedar major near canteen and I mentioned about going for the tehsil and he just telling him in Pashto about me. Subedar Riaz did mention in Pashto towards my dress and I told him that I will change. Now we three were walking towards the gate, Riaz told me that old tower on the side was tehsil office till 1992, there was no boundary wall where the cricket pitch and volley ball court are now, there were colourful graffiti on the walls which are there for the children because no less than thirteen families live here, officer's being the lone exception rest all of scouts. There are see saw and swing along with merry go around, there were air defence soldiers also with missiles, scouts with machine guns, all very aesthetic; On the walls the name of shaheeds are there with a brief description of the individual, Riaz told me that they have written the name of school the deceased attended. All done by previous wing commander. The last sentry shook hand wearing red beret and out we came. I stepped out first not knowing what to expect, what a feeling to step out into a new world.

A road with the gradual mountain slope and bushes all dry. No need to even look right and left while crossing the road but I did out of habit; picked in Glasgow and Harrisonburg. On my left a

motor bike approached with men faces covered with scarf to cut off the heat and carrying AK-47. I froze for eternity to see what happens, it had a bad cylinder and bursted near me and passed by the last one making an eye contact for last moment. Riaz was now near me and we crossed now I was walking astride the road when the second motorbike went. I had a full contact with the second passenger who had the barrel pointed towards us and passed by.. In the end of road is Afghanistan, Riaz said, how far I inquired. First Khar Kamar then Datta Khel and then border say around 60 kilometers, which was wrong its not more than twenty. A kind of hut was in the way from where two men came out both unarmed and locals, with locals I mean Dauris. They shook hand and I noticed a very pretty boy about whom the Zakhmi Dill song is all about. There is a concept among the Pathans where they have a kind of pet boy moving around; but this was the first time I saw here. We entered the tehsil and later met Tehsildar a young man who looked too civilised to be here. The usual round of tea break and I inquired about the record and after an hour I realised that among all these I had more authentic knowledge about them and area. Nevertheless I still learnt a lot. The tehsil was made in 1984 and came to present office in 2004 and Tehsildar being too young had no idea that there is anything like border and administrative report yearly, it is no more written. A meeting has been arranged with an old man, a manuscript in Urdu is also on the horizon. I asked them to explain me the area but then I have to explain them.

Tochi valley does not start at this point rather it is another 100 kilometers where almost three major arteries of water joins and forms Tochi and it dwindles down the whole arm starting from fingers and going upward. Boya is the area wrist toward joint. Its importance lies in the fact that it is the first crossing point of Tochi in case if you want to continue toward Miran Shah. On the other hand Boya is important because it allows the crossing for Shawal Valley. This particular area is called Upper Daur the Ismael Khel Wazir tribe in the north and Khanoi Khel in the south. Dauris are an agricultural tribe, although they are relative to Wazir in a distant way but a kind of relative which Wazir seldom owns. They were the first one which approached the British to provide protection to them from the Wazirs and in lieu they agree to pay taxes and this is how all this started. They all agreed and added bit of here and there mostly about Fakir of Ipi. I asked them about Spins Khaisora and I need to check the account also. We all came out.

I again stepped out of the Tehsil gate first and stood to let other two through small opening, a motor cyclist went by, then a pickup full of talibans no second thought came, they had a good look at me for me it was like a girl standing alone outside the college gate with a pickup full of talibans passing in front. I did not try to have an eye contact with them but I still had one who was talking to another but there were no hostile eyes but then what is normal and what is abnormal here I quite different from the dictionary meaning of words. Now we all three walked myself again on the roadside. I said to Riaz these were talibans and he nodded, they can fire anytime I said, well they can but they don't because we have a pact we don't check them and they don't fire at us. I agreed and genuinely appreciated the pact. A Toyota hatchback approached with tinted glasses, I have just read the old faded signboard inside the tehsil office which had warned that any car having tinted glasses will roll down the glasses while passing in front of post otherwise it will be fired upon. This car had one window half rolled and I said to Riaz, Taliban and he nodded. I looked at Car there was nothing else to look around while crossing the road, in previous instances at least I could see the Taliban inside but not now, they also passed, I was still wearing the khaki felt hat for safety against sun. I have no idea what went through all these men when they saw me as I thought about them so did they because I was different, had I been wearing a uniform I would at least be placed in any category of scout or army but now what. Without hat probably I might have escaped the scrutiny being one of the tehsil official but this head gear is the key. I must change my head gear to the local pagri otherwise I can

easily be taken for a American agent. Recent trip to meet my girl friend Reena at Harrisonburh will be the key evidence 'after all you went to white house, yes or no ? and I will say yes. Then you were in the Langely district yes or no and I will nod affirmative; what evidence will then be left. I just shiver on the thoughts.

The Mus Khan Post is shrouded in the dust layer as it is quite common to the Tochi valey and by it self s another evidence of how old and dry is the history of valley. This becomes even more extreme as one follows upstream. Thus the migration which took place is much older than the other riparian valleys. Tochi Valley is the opening of the all Central Aryan Plataeu , it is water outlet of the paltaeu which can very rightly be called as the Pathan or Wazir Plataeu. The old most ferious of all tribes were the Ye-Hu tribe that came down and Tochi is not a ntive word neither Persian nor English. The tribes came down and they did not seetlesd astride the river because waterflow was unreliable so they had their habitat on a bit higher ground. It is alos quite logical to expect that also had the most individualistic of them lal living on the high ground and Musa Khan Post has to be seen in that perspective. No dount the British made this a classic warning post but if they had not done that some native might have done so or in past it could have happened. The nature of habitat also is a pinter of history where there is no phusical evidence in the form of ruins or documents taken the choice of posts are logical evidence of that continuous human living pattern in which high ground occupation is logical choice.

The local oral tradition runs on similar lines where long long ago Boya existed and it existed when Moen jo daro was there. A resting point for the caravans for the travellers for the tribes. The revenvue and ownership was with the Wazir Tribes the Ismael Khels. There were no individual owners or landlord rather every man a king in himself bounded with blood lines with others at times an extended family . It was like this since the human memory records and is still the same in every aspect. Live and let live as long the Riwaj and Shariah is being observed.

When I had crossed the road as bit mentally safe the last of the vehicles a nav approached, now I had calculated that if a fire has not come from cars or motorbikes than van is the last to expect doing the samw ethus I had a full stare at the passeengers. A woman in veil I mean full vein was sitting with the window open and in the last seat was agirl student of marriageable age. That measb life is going on normal if a girl can go for studies away from house ina wagon and than comes back to home than life is normal.

Later I had tea with Hammad and listen to spicy juicy and naughty tales of lieutants life in Karachi. It seems that nothing much has changed in the way of subalterns life at least in Karachi. Stories of fun , running after girls and thinking of new and novel ways to impress the feminine side. The golden advices of another subaltern who claiming a masters degree in these fields making the matter worse for youngsters. Commanding officers of varying nature some who would take the subalterns out for parties themselves other making them come to office in the evenings as well. All these making life here comfortable and historic in nature. Where will this young man is going to end up? He has already proven his mettle in this war facing bullets.

1730 hours. The dust storm is still running out, ligt came for brief period enough to recharge the laptop. I had a joint , a call from commandant the good news is that he has found old record of all officers dating from 1940 till to date; also the complete address of two SJs. Visinbility has gone down now the post is s asilhoutte thus best time to attack is during a dust storm in hot weather. Voice of crow is the only voice or the preeing of tabs other wise absolutely stillness

Tuesday 2340 hours

The day started in a normal day last night myself and Immad were chatting till 0300 hours the topics ranged from the effective use of helicopters to the venture of Immad in a coaching centre after girls where another senior major was also after the same girl and so on. In the morning after breakfast at around ten and a joint I walked with Immad to one of the post in the rear of the fort facing the river, Immad narrated me his find that few rabbits are also living here as pets. We walked to the post which does not have any name but a good one with two scouts one havildar and other a soldier, havildar belonged to the Oerakzai Tribe and soldier a Turi. The view of the valley is good and one starts to grasp the very concept of Tochi Valley itself. The time just froze, a river which was partly visible, a green oasis and on our immediate face on the other side of the river on a track were two mud houses rather compounds I think mud forts or palace or villa is more appropriate word. Fantastic architecture in layers and tiers, it was a compound on a much grand level than anything so far. If you face the river which becomes the valley mouth also the space opens up to almost ten miles of width. From the left Shawal Valley joins in with the Tochi Valley coming from right with a huge hill in the centre and then the range of hillocks going in the far distant. The valley which turns right is leading to Afghanistan and at the bend is Kaamr Khumar but before that Pai Wazir with its white tower and as you follow the flow of water downstream from where the two valley joins in the Datta Khel is on left from where a track then leads upwards first to Tut narai and then onwards to Razmak.

Degan is the most notorious town or village here which is also situated in that vast green plateau which is rolling from south to north, Boya comes next and then the track goes on the other bank. I tried to put my geography in order and was briefed by the havildar that you cannot see Khar Kamar from here but it is visible from Musa Khan post. The over all picture seems to be that you can be standing anywhere from 1000 BC to well present day and it seems nothing has changed if you take out electric poles and black road, other than it could be Jerusalem of Jesus with Romans occupying it and Jews living under them, it was how it looked when Alexander marched through the area in 323 BC, it could be Nineva with people building mud tower to reach the sky, it was time of Hammurabbi giving his laws, a moen jo daro or Harrapa with Aryans living, it resembled Mecca before the last Prophet {pbuh} was born and well it is still resembling that town even after thousand years. It also gives the classic look of wild west with dusty road and mud houses orchards and no law in the town. It all depends upon your imagination and it was never short of fuel because more I observed the mud villas and in far distant at Degan the more solid became my imagination. The havildar informed me that in far distant near Degan is a factory which is extracting chromite and there are strong rumours of gold present in the area. In American history it is the gold rush days, the hill behind the Degan all of sudden brought back memories of Mackennas Gold.

A tractor with a trolley behind it brought me back to the present time. I was trying to figure out how the 1958 and 1966 skirmish took place here in which Tochi Scouts were involved, the invaders came from the valley mouth there is no other way less one which comes down from Gharla mai but it involved crossing of river. The invaders can come from any direction such is the layout of the area and the militant culture of the people.

Meanwhile Subeadr Riaz came and I asked him certain questions like how far is Degan, who owns this house, who is living in that house which is next to the fort wall. He first pointed at Degan and showed a white building towards the left and said it is the madrassah of Gul Bahadur the man most wanted, on the right at the river bend is the white pillar that is a mosque which is being run by moulvai sadiquallah, all names are such which are stomach churning in present situation all having head money and rated as most wanted in the world. The very house next to the fort is owned by

another Taliban leader who keeps an eye on our fort and they were the one who made sure in 2007 that no one sells us or bring any edible to the fort, we were left with only two sacks of flour when one day we just stopped a truck carrying 400 sacks to Afghanistan which we got off loaded and told the driver to go back to Bannu and get the sacks from our supply store, meanwhile another truck came with almost equal number of ghee and we did the same to him, although we give them the fare but rest was given to them by the supply, thus we solved our siege issue. We all had a good laugh over this ingenuity of mind.

Riaz is well informed and updated me that 16000 rupees is given to each member of the Daur Qaum living here as part of their collective earning on chromite sale, daily 14 trucks go out down country. I was fully impressed with the utility of qaum system. We ordered tea and the scout ran down to fetch it from the mess, I inquired Riaz about the proposed meeting with local malik and the Taliban leader on the history issue.

Riaz later gave me and Hammad one of the very useful insight into frontier warfare and also on this conflict. He recalled how in 2007 the Guerrillas of regular army and scouts conducted joint operation in the adjoining village and we ran short of water, in the end the villagers gave us the water during a respite in the war but not to the army because by ideology they hate authority. They will let you do anything in there area as long as you inform them and take their blessing. The concept of state authority has different connotation in this part of Tochi valley. If you are besieged then you are at your own, as such I have to think first of all about the safety of my own qaum and the scouts. The feud runs here for generation we have to live among these people they are our own we cannot kill them without any reason.

Riaz narrated how he was the post commander at Where they had the generator for electricity and the very day they started operation the talibans came and ordered not to use it again, I gave them my identity card showing that I am also Wazir, next day I did not sitched on the lights but power was there, very next day the same talibans came and apologised for inconvenience, they had showed my card to their commander Moulvi.... Who not only appreciate my gesture but also appointed me a local commander of the Taliban. The hard reality is that if you want anything done here it is through diplomacy and not through use of force. I fully appreciated his philosophy and agreed with every word he said. Army comes here for a year or two and then another unit and another, so no emotions just raw killing but that is neither the solution and above all army to date has not shown any muscles because there are no muscles at all to be displayed therefore these militia officers have adapted the approach of solving the issues at local level, Boya for all practical purpose is an independent state with its own riwaj and customs.

Riaz most explosive narrative was the one where a suicide bomber laden with explosives drove to In hunt for divisional commander who was on reconnaissance in the area, it was by chance that I opened the car and saw the death material, we were twenty men at the post and there was no chance of surviving in case if he had pulled the chord. I chatted with him on being Wazir and persuaded him that his target is not in the area and he will be informed when that arrives so it will be better if he goes back now and try next time, the suicide bomber agreed and went back. Unthinkable but I agree that it must have happened.

Riaz's philosophy is simple live and let live. He understands his vulnerability and also of the post. We help these people by letting them go out when they are in need to bury someone in a curfew day, they helped us with letting our scouts go to attend the funeral of mother on a day when there is no curfew. It is mutual. Once a girl ran away with a scout who was on a post and a feud started

resultantly all the four platoons stationed at Boya were posted at other areas but I came back with a permission from commandant . The issue was much broader the feud would have lasted for decades and a war would have started among the clans. We finally agreed in a Jirga where the girl was allowed to marry the scout and never to be seen again in the tribe area. Our plea was that girl was beaten by her brother and she came to the post asking forwhich was granted by the individual scout as part of Pakhtoon honour thus nothing of riwaj was broken.

I was interested in the social pattern of the people so I inquired how you get married here. The boy's mother normally selects the girl and then girl's mother visit the boy's house and sees the situation and the boy and that is the end. Who pays who was my net query, well different clans have different riwaj normally the boy's family gives presently 4 tolas of gold and also pay for the dowry of the girl. What about women eloping away. Seldom was the answer because if it happens then the girl's clan is not allowed to wear the traditional Lung the paggri as long as the parents of the girl are alive. On the other hand majority of the men are abroad earning money and there wives are all alone and so is the case of many more whose husbands are driving trucks and they normally visits once a year so many have committed suicide I did not ask the number but I knew it is very less.

Meanwhile dust storm was kicking in the valley and winds became fast and wild thus we came down and walked back to the mess.

Saturday , tomorrow I will be leaving Boya and intend going to Datta Khel to see the area .

2230 Hours room No 4 Tochi Mess

All of a sudden heavy firing has started, I was just having a cup of tea, since there has been a kind of peace thus initially I thought that generator has started but then when the burst was long and a sound of rocket coupled it thus now I am convinced that it is firing. The problem is that at times army or scouts also carry out drills thus no one knows what has happened. Normally my course mate major General Ali in adjoining room does make telephone call and it is always reassuring that he is around but now he has gone on leave . Lets see what happens next, tea is getting cold.

0130 hours 21/22 June night 2012.

Well nothing more about the firing, by this time I have become used to firing, hold on there is a whistling noise as rockets are being fired, generator is also running but this definitely firing of rocket , much ado nothing. The electricity here is eccentric, I have no idea when it comes and when it goes, at times there is not much of power even to run a fan as now.

Let me start from Boya. I did not went to Datta Khel because there was no convoy going there and secondly I was not sure about the behaviour of army, not that that they would have said anything for the fact that my course mate is the general but they are always suspicious of everything and everyone. The Commandant Colonel Wajahat had directed Captain Immad to drop me to MiranShah in the Scouts vehicle but that entailed a lot of administrative inconvenience thus I said that I will go back to MiranShah on the army convoy. The procedure is that the convoys from the forward posts like Doi Toi and Datta Khel where army units are deployed leave their respective areas early in the morning on Sunday, a curfew is imposed but it is not observed in Wazir areas which starts from Boya onwards. These convoys under protection reaches Boya Bridge where another convoy from

Gharlamai which is located on the other bank of river Tochi also joins at Bridge and from there they move as one convoy, this area is Daur territory and Maulvi Sadiq Noor is the war lord where as Maulvi Gul Bahadur is the uncrowned king of Wazir territory in Degan, the Datta Khel tribes are lords by themselves.

On Friday night at boya one person was shot dead by the Pawani Post at night because he had ventured close to the post, his dead body remained where it was shot and in the morning the Khassadars came and so were the Taliban's or the men of Sadiq Noor and were satisfied that it is not an aggressive act by the Scouts rather it was the ault of that man, the man had an identity card in his pocket and a Saudi passport as well. On Saturday the representative of Sadiq Noor acme and met subedar Riaz outside the fort unofficially to convey the message from Sadiq Noor that nothing to worry. Riaz at his own send the felicitation message and regards of Captain Immad and in the evening the reply came back that sadia Noor is also giving regards. The talibans requested that the compulsory compensation which government gives for every person who dies of state's bullet may please be given. All this was narrated by the subedar Riaz.

I was now mentally worried lest this act of killing the person may braek this peace pact and I may become a target of explosives or revenge. In this part of world everything is possible and nothing can be ruled out. There is no logic there are no questions asked simple killing is not enough it has to be the most painful death imaginable, they peel your skin off and then cut your head with which they play football. Myself and Captain Immad had been discussing this whole scenario every night that why we are not reacting to this, we are only reactive. However a week stay in Boya has opened new vistas of vision in understanding this convoluted warfare. I have seen with my own eyes and also took pictures of Taliban's taking evening walks with a foreigner probably an Uzbek around the Northern wall of the fort, if you wave they wave back. I thought of why they are not being shot with a sniper rifle or a machine gun, that is the most talked about question every where but on ground realities are different and they are unexplainable , it is only by staying here that one understands them. Myself and Immad discussed many novel ideas of destroying the enemies. The dilemma is that there is no proper word even to explain them. Sitting in Harrisonburgh it is easy to classify all of them as Taliban and just shot them and burn their houses, there is no morality involved because this what they are doing to us. But as I said it is convoluted .

On Sunday morning after breakfast, hold on let me add few more words about Boya. Captain Immad was a good company and I really enjoyed his subaltern tales which are no less than Venus in India. He has spent all of his three years of army service in Karachi and as such had plenty of tales to narrate. Not much has changed in army way of living or shall I say a subaltern way of life in these twenty five years. If I had not seen Immad on 6th May limping and smiling despite going through a hell of fire I would have classified him as a chocolate cream soldier but I now respect him and admire him. He is living the way an army officer should live which is have fun when it is there because you never know when you are hit by a bullet. The boy has proven that he is worthy of all the juicy tales which he has narrated.

Our routine was simple getting up late, at time I did not slept all night and went out for early morning walk within the fort. Taking pictures and chatting with posts. I think there was only one occasion when it happened other wise getting up late, having a joint and then , one day it was going to Tehsil , other day it was going there gain to meet the local Malik, on day three it was long sleep , on day four there was a farewell lunch for havildar Ijaz who was going on retirement, on day five it was normal and that is it. First about that farewell lunch. The tradition in Scouts is that when a person goes on retirement his Qaum gives him a farewell food. We were also invited, Ijaz was garlanded and then

we had food sitting on floor , I noticed that all scouts are very good in shall I say table manners. They use fork for eating or peeling the meat of chicken. This is a sign of civilisation. Then after sumptuous food which was tasty, I had mutton and avoided chicken. Ijaz has spend thirteen years as gunman of the commandant, he is Yousafzai by tribe and lives in Swabi. I have got his farewell speech and list of gifts with me as a record, he was given thirteen tea sets, ten water sets, five sweet dish bowls sets, one water cooler, one umbrella, one blanket, six clocks, hot pot set, unstitched clothes and almost ten thousand rupees in cash. I was amazed, Ijaz stood and one man from his Qaum read the farewell speech in urdu with a number of Pashtu couplets which always were applauded by the guests and qaum members. Then he announced the gifts and they were presented to him and he received them in one hand and very next moment they were put on table and next gift was there. It was like a royalty, I have not seen this kind of exuberance even in marriages and mind you this all happened at Boya. Then Ijaz spoke and there were tears in his eyes over this show of affection. It is at this point that one understands the bond of Qaum. This is a cycle which goes on and on. The junior most soldier of his Qaum also gave him present and so were gifts from other Qaums and from canteen contractor from Tehsildar. The concept of giving cash is novel to army culture but quite common in Scouts, here everything is done in the name of Qaum, they may even take bribes from transporters for the welfare of Qaum. The bottom line is as long as it is for the collective benefit no one will report .

21st June 2012, North Waziristan, MiranShah.

Two days back the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr Yousaf Raza Gilani has been disqualified by the apex court because he did not wrote a letter to the Swiss government asking them to initiate criminal charges against President of Pakistan Mr Asif Ali Zardari. The premier's plea was that the constitution gives blanket amnesty to the president on this the court gave him a punishment of 30 seconds. The opposition and all those lawyers who normally wait for such happenings very swiftly again went to the court and asked for justice that since premier has now become a criminal because he has been punished thus he should be disqualified. The speaker of the national assembly gave the ruling that it is only the parliament which can decides this issue and there is nothing wrong with a 30 seconds punishment rather it was admonished and not punished. The opposition and professional lawyers and sympathizers of the nation went back to the court to ask about the legality of the speaker's ruling. Meanwhile the son of chief justice was involved in a high level crime drama in which he went abroad on someone else money to Monte Carlo and stayed with women who was not his wife. The chief justice remarked that he has no idea what kind of job his son is doing and neither he has asked his son from where does this brand new Range Rover has come from. I have no doubt that the government had some kind of hand behind this drama but they did not manipulate the son of chief justice and very next day the chief justice gave this decision and now country is without a prime minister because since he was given 30 seconds punishment so he must leave the office.

Sitting here at MiranShah and going through all this, what is happening here one cannot resist but to recall the destruction of Baghdad by Mongols and at that precise moment the ulemas and scholars were busy debating whether such and such animal is permitted to be eaten or not. The Supreme Court has acted in most immature manner by disregarding and discarding the international environment, they are more concerned with the lacunas of law. Let it be kept in mind that civil war in America was started due to the ruling of Supreme Court which allowed the slavery in 1848. Also in 1971 the same supreme court of America ruled that orgy, gangbang, water sport, bestiality, BDSM and many other such acts performed by men and women not to forget animals should be treated as work of art and not as prostitution.

How can six or seven men can pass a ruling that is offensive to an overwhelming population of the world and now because of that judgment there are sexual crimes taking place all over the world but those judges care a hoot. In such environments as prevailing now in Pakistan no one in his right mind should come forward for investment or business. Had those judges be here they would have created a lot of lacunas in dealing with terrorism? Did you saw the man planting the explosives on the road? Can you recognize this man in turban as the same who fired on you from 300 yards?. Did you had the warrant to search his vehicle after you saw him firing on the crowd? And in the end any good lawyer can get Maulvi Sadiq Noor and Gul Bahadur scot free by declaring them insane and mentally retarded there by absolving them of all these killings. The state would end up paying more on the medical facilities of these men rather than spending the same amount for the rehabilitation of injured people.

On political front the best part being here is that one is saved by unlimited political talk shows that are going around. No one has been made premier rather Makhdoom Shahabuddin the nominee has been arrested on the orders of supreme court or words to that effect. Malik Riaz the man who alleged that the son of Chief Justice has been black mailing him is facing contempt of court, he is debarred from talking to media. No lawyer is willing to fight his case as all have been threatened that they will not be allowed to enter the Bar, two other lawyers are facing this scenario. In short it is a judicial coup and these seven men have made this country a hostage now plunging it into a crisis after crisis. No one can talk about them no riots no campaign, strange . I don't think it has happened anywhere else for long people have been talking about the Bangladesh Model in which military and judiciary runs the country with a subservient parliament and bureaucracy and it seems it has now been put in place here. The one change here is that gone one step higher with Judiciary taking the lead. In this scenario the army gets an open hand as they are allowed to basically run the foreign policy and this is one thing which Pakistan Army always loves to do. Now any civilian government who dares to oppose any policy matter can be taken to the task in a very polite manner by simply any one filing a petition in supreme court or even they taking a suo motto notice, the advantage in this system is no Western government can make any hue and cry , they in any case are always more comfortable in dealing with the military. The media gets a free hand on any one less the military and judiciary , this is what has happened now. No political government can survive in this manner for the reason that every act of them can be petition . Public feels contended in seeing all rich men being disgraced in court, just have a look at the Malik Riaz. Media gets free hand in making money after all media is a money making commercial organisation. This is new face of Pakistan and there seems to be no way out. Chief Justice Iftikhar Choudhry is the man with a shallow ego who can even put this country's future at stake for the sake of his ego. He has nothing to loose, he is getting a handsome pay, house, chauffer driven car and pension and above all a reputation for being honest. He is after all the man who owns no car no house and does not know what job his son is doing and from where he is getting the money. He is still lauded by public and his lawyers for his stance against the General Musharraf in 2007 when he was sacked for alleged corruption. Now he is a free man, where as Media can put any man into disgrace but it is only Ifthar who has the power to even put the media into silence. He is the most powerful man and most dangerous man in the history of Pakistan.

Background of all this dates back to 1977- 79 when a military coup not only toppled the democratic government of Mr. Zulfiqar Bhutto but also send him to gaol and he was hanged on a murder charge in which despite the supreme court giving a split decision in which three judges out of six acquitted him but then chief justice put his lot in making sure that he is hanged. From then onwards supreme court became a political tool in the hands of military always ensuring that Peoples Party the Bhutto's party should suffer in one way or the other. Benazir Bhutto daughter of late Z.A.

Bhutto finally came to power in 1989 and soon her government was sent home on corruption charges and her husband the present president Mr Asif Ali Zardari was indicted in as many as hundred cases and remained behind bars as long as the party was in opposition, Benazir came back to power in 1993 and Zardari was released on bail again Benazir's government was dismissed and her rival Mr Nawaz Sharif the darling of establishment was again in power. In 1999 Nawaz Shariff dismissed the army chief Musharaff and instantly army took power and Nawaz was sent on exile and cases of corruption and criminal intent were framed.

In 2007 Musharaff tried to sack the present chief justice and unexpectedly the nation stood up led by lawyers and when Musharaff finally agreed to have elections , Benazir was shot dead. In the end Musharaff had to leave the country and People's Party came into power with Gilani as premier and Zardari as president. They under the political pressure which was led by arch rival Nawaz Shariff agreed to reinstate Iftikhar Choudhry as chief justice. Iftikhar in his very first moves put all those judges on trial who did not took his side during his days of suspension, he had judges of his own choice making sure that even judges who have completed their tenure been given extension in service, he made sure that he has judges loyal to him. In June 2010 he had an emergency meeting at midnight when president nominated the senior most judge as a replace of a judge who has completed his service; Iftikhar got the next junior judge elevated and appointed as judge of supreme court.

The judiciary in Pakistan as in other part of world is regarded as sacred and debate is still raging that who is supreme, Parliament or the Supreme Court. The combination and alliance of media and judiciary is now in place and Pakistan again faces an uphill challenge. Army is happy because its chief General Kayani is already working on extension of service which is due to expire next year. Thus it is also army high command which has high stakes. In case if the whole system is sent home packing then there will be no one to appoint a new army chief and both Iftikhar & Kayani will remain in power.

Friday 22nd June 2012.

I have not been able keep track of the days , I thought it is Wednesday but then the muazzan first from the city side and then from the Tochi Mosque gave the Khutba and it was only then that I realised that it is Friday. This day is quite important as almost everyone offers prayers. The khutba is short and to the point where as the Khutba coming from the city side is always loud. I have no idea what sermon the city Maulvi gives since it is in Pashto but from the tone it is not difficult to guess what are the topics. In Punjab the Friday sermon is long and to be honest quite vulgar at times , the maulvi tends to cross the limits, one time in my own village I heard the maulvi saying ‘ women who are atking abth now should hurry’ which is quite offensive but none dare to speak. While going to the Boya and coming abck I noticed the mosques design here, they are of mud and no high minarets, only at Degan I looked through the binoculars to see a white building which was madreessah also. Enroute to Boya the only way I could make out about mosque was through the slight curve in the otherwise normal building, this curve is Manbar. At Boya I offered the Juma Prayers and sermon was in Pashto. Women does not go the mosques here, in Punjab in certain villages they do go, my grandmother used to go but not my mother.

At around 1900 hours I was sitting in my room trying to make some sense of the Tochi Scouts during period of 1922 – 1936 which is by and large quite administrative in nature, the match between Greece and Germany in Euro 2012 was on television , out side there was private dinner going on , there were fiur or five officers all colonels and brigadiers with television set in the lawn which was

not for the match but to listen to new political situation talk shows. All of a sudden there was a blast, the sound was terrifying as some thing has hit the mess building, my heart beat became abnormal, like the heart beat of a rabbit when you catch him. The Television went off the air and then there was another blast. The missile I later learnt had hit the mess barrack which is not more than twenty yards from my room. My first instinct was to switch off the room lights as the assassin is only targeting me, on second thought I switched it on and just sat there. The mind made an appreciation that whether I sit in the room or outside the chances of a missile hitting me are equal so I just sat on the chair. I thought of Reena and composed a message for her. In such a scenario it is natural to think of loved ones and I cannot think of any one else other than her.

The back ground of this attack goes to another incident which happened at South Waziristan where 41 Punjab tried to bring a compound not more than a kilometre away from there position under there control and almost a replica of what happened here on 6th May took place again, Army suffered a dozen casualties including an officer. The notion of victory has passed back to the Mahsuds and Army has again suffered a confidence shaking blood mayhem.

On Saturday morning the aviation contingent here invited me for a tea break, the colonel staff and G-1 Intelligence Lieutenant Colonel Umar were also invited, it was in connection with their room renovation. Major Adnan invited me when I met him I recalled that he is the same officer whose picture I saw in 2005 sitting at Tochi Mess, why I remembered him was because that was the first time I saw Tochi Mess pictures. He is in cobra and it was he who gave me an update on the Ladda Operation. I was invited to see the Tennis Final in the evening at the Artillery Courts .

I walked the one mile distance at 1700 hours, it is quite hot at this time still bearable, I wore my black shoes, last time I tried the chaplis/ sandal on the same track and was not comfortable as the stones start pricking your soles. The artillery is always reputed for its administrative arrangements and this was no exception. The ground a clay court was well marked with white limestone , there are two types of lime stones used I learnt later a normal and liquid. The game is not serious one rather a shugal, but it is played seriously with little observance of rules. The players all officers. The first match was for third position between Brigadier Shahid and Lieutenant Colonel Umar on one side and Commander Logistics colonel Akhtar and Captain Hamza on other side. Shahid is a cool and very polite person and same holds true for all, Akhtar creates life in the court with his remarks. Other than this they all are average players. There was a umpire a captain sitting on a high chair , two linesmen also officers and almost a dozen pickers. A dozen officers were there to witness the match , 45 Medium or Field is the new artillery regiment replacing the 149 which is going to Bahawalpur. The CO of new unit is a smart guy with a body builder body , he seems to be the fittest among all his officers a sad reflection of his officers, however I was disappointed to see him wearing an iron bangle which is worn by shias , this clear reflection of religious sectarianism is no good.

The match was fun , later the final between Tochi Scouts and the Divisional Headquarters took place. Now this is in my opinion the most dangerous Tennis tournament which is played with guns all around and soldiers on sentry duty as well

3rd July 2012.

Another full moon has elapsed, I saw it last evening when it was at its best glow, I understand that a full moon is a full moon , but what I want to highlight is that at around 2100 hours it was well above the lone tree at the entrance of the mess, this is my yard stick, at 1900 hours it is too early but still visible but at 2000 hours it is half visible through the dark and dense shades of the tree , its upper half visible and light pouring all around. At 2100 hours it is well above the tree and

then all night it travels from left to right. This left to right is in relation to my room and this bench which is placed outside otherwise it is east –west movement.

The drones are humming above, they seem to be a part of life here, all the time present in air and their low humming noise. Since last full moon almost half a dozen drone attacks have been carried out, the last one was yesterday morning then on Sunday morning before that on Friday evening. The television normally gives instant news of the attack and the number of people killed, so I think they all have hit the right targets. I now believe that even the troops also look upon them as friendly because they are hitting the very men who are causing the problem.

Last one month has been the Euro Cup football at Ukraine and Poland, Spain finally won it. Mario Balotelli was fantastic and I think his both goals against Germany are classic especially the second one; but after the final I think he lacks sportsman spirit, the greatness is even in accepting the defeat after all it is just a sports and better team won. Pakistan made a comeback at Colombo, but the test seems to be heading for a draw. There was a controversy about the Mohsin Khan and Ramiz Raja, I was fortunate to watch that programme on Geo sports. I have failed to understand the issue. Ramiz has passed some remarks about Mohsin and this Mohsin is a regular presenter on the Geo sports channel. No when in a country you can pass derogatory remarks about the president and prime minister all in the name of freedom of expression then what is the issue in calling a cricket coach as unfit to be so. One of the journalists called Ramiz Raja disgracer, I think Rameez should sue him. England has beaten Australia in both the one dayers, a sad affair but I think it has got something to do with the Queen's jubilee. It would have been preposterous to lose to Australia during the jubilee year.

Personally I am in a bad state of mind, feeling all alone and none to blame other than me, flashes of Azadeh, Salik and Samina come to my mind on regular basis and so does Reena. I phoned her on her birthday, she at least has the courtesy to attend it although she has stopped sending me emails. She was the first and the last girl to be so caring. At my age and state of mind she is the perfect companion but here again I have to blame myself. At times I think what am I doing and what I intend doing next.

I have been doing the research on Fakir of Ipi and managed to reach the year 1945. Fantastic person, the most accomplished guerrilla leader, rather to call him guerrilla leader is not the very appropriate word, there is no word to describe him, he is not Omar Mukhtar although he has a lot of commonality with him, he is above Che Guevara and Fidel and Mao. Lawrence of Arabia comes quite close but Ipi was not in politics, to him fighting was all that kept him going. Osama Bin Laden is the one which comes most close to him in terms of historical similarities, both religious and both were hunted by the super powers of their time, Britain hunted Ipi with almost two divisions of army and group of Royal Air Force aircraft but never been able to capture him, this is where Osama lacks the vision. Shami Pir was another historical character which emerged onto the North Waziristan scene for a brief period and created sensation. It seems unbelievable but it is true that a foreign religious person within months can have so much followers among the Wazirs.

Weather has been pretty good, frequent showers and not very intense heat, light remains available till 1930 because officers play tennis, oh I forgot to mention about Wimbledon, Nadal's exit was unexpected let's see what happens to Andy Murray.

I have typed over 45000 words so far and I am quite pleased with myself but still I think I lack discipline and this discipline is only available at Reena's place in Harisonburgh.

It is half past five in the morning and day seems to have been started long ago, only the humans are sleeping although majority of them offers fajr prayers, this is the beauty of Fajr prayers or for that matter all the prayers that they divide the day and gives an natural time period of the day. I missed these Fajr prayers in Glasgow and Harrisonburg where it is very difficult to start the day because there is no set time for starting but Fajr is the key to success. All our daily routines start with Fajr prayers, now I can go and have a cup of tea from the mess because I know that the cook and waiters were up for the prayers and it is this thing which is lacking in non Muslim countries. In Christian world Sunday mass is one which keeps your Sunday organised but here the whole day all around the year is kept intact. Ramadan is also approaching and I have my apprehensions about it but here in Tochi Mess it would be fantastic, I think I will be able to keep the fast for the first time in my life in a proper manner; lets see.

11th September 2012

I managed to reach the aviation base in time, the traffic in early part of the day on University Road was a matter of concern. There is no public transport in the city, the private wagons are quite inadequate for the load, saw small and young school children waiting for the transport, many others were being transported packed like sardines in small pickups. I have vivid image of little school girls clad in brown uniform their head covered in scarves, not all had the chance to have a seat, as I passed them in my four door cabin I was transfixed into the eyes of a small girl standing innocently in the wagon. The road is dirty and dusty, near war cemetery there are two check points both manned by the army police, there was a fat havildar along with two young soldiers manning them, he had his sub machine gun wrapped around his fat tummy , in my opinion it would take him around ninety seconds to get it into firing position which is long time in present circumstances. Another check post is near the air force base, there is one more in between these two. The air force personals were without any arms and moved in a slow motion, however there were warning signs painted on the wall that warns any one of being shot if he is suspected of any suspicious movement. Another check post is near the aviation base which is manned by the 9 Squadron, it was quite efficient.

Had the breakfast and informed the duty NCO of my presence, luckily the weather was good and we took off at 0830 hours. There was quite a queue at the helicopter parking area, few air force men also about them I was sure that they will not get the seat in the helicopter, inter services rivalry. The helicopter was mainly carrying the ammunition of Cobra attack helicopters placed at Wanna. We first headed towards the Thal on Kurram. Due to overnight rain the valley is green and visibility clear, small clouds waft around innocently and I could see the Durand Line. The area looks and represents a marked difference from the May when I flew over it, it is scenic now. Thal Fort is quite grandeur in construction I had visited it and stayed night in it in 1992, it has a tree that was planted by the sister of Mohammad Ali Jinnah while they were enroute to Parachinar

21 September 2012- 2330 hours

Today was the day of respect for the holy prophet 'youn ishaq e rasul'. World has changed in last ten days because one American {small arms firing is going outside, no idea what is this all about, short bursts of machine guns with intermittent loud bursts} had put on you tube a movie 'innocence of Muslims' which I have not seen but which has put the whole world on an inferno {firing still going on }. It all started I think on 12th September when I saw the American Embassy in Ben Ghazi being razed to ground , American ambassador and three others were killed and instantaneously { firing is now quite near now}there were demonstration { now, long bursts of fire is the fort under attack} let me see outside,

0100 hours. After an hour the things have returned to normalcy, there was intense firing, illuminating rounds of artillery and mortars and again intense firing. Night is beautiful outside with heavenly bliss of stars and Drone. The birds shrieked and cats growled. I sat for some time outside on the bench wondering about my own disposition and fate. I am emotionless; I think none will be worried much if I am hit. I came inside in a state of fear as to where the missile will land, will it land on my roof and is the roof strong enough to sustain the shock. Thought of Mizar, Dwa Toi, Datta Khel, of all the persons my mind recalled Flight Lieutenant Lowell who died in similar conditions at data Khel in 1943, he had the picture of his wife at his death bed.

I am not that scared as I was in May this year but still fear is fear. There is outrage all over the world; seventeen people have died in Pakistan only today seven cinemas have been burnt down. The freedom of speech has taken over thirty lives so far all over the world and today French magazine has published naked cartoon of prophet, it is too much. To me the war has begun today and soon the consequences will be evident. Only last week in Islamabad I saw western men and a women strolling at Kohsar market and I was happy to notice that but that is now gone for long. Only the Asians and black will feel safe here in this country for long , white race is in danger of elimination now. It looks berserk to think that no western country is willing to take any step to put an end to this madness, the actress of the movie has filed for the taking away of the movie from U tube but the court has rejected that on the plea that the producer has not been given a copy of the warrant, what the hell is this.

There seem to be quite a resemblance of how the WW1 began , it all started with a man firing a shot at Sarajevo and who knows the WW3 start from a man putting on a movie or a cartoon about the prophet. Bu all means the west has lost the war against terror in this one week, they have harvested a new generation of people who will be brought up in a hate environments, the beauty is that UK has remained aloof from all this nonsense and two most idiotic countries the French and Americans are paying heavily for this insanity. The very idea of free speech is absurd, the media is killer, remember what Hitler sad in his autobiography when he pointed to the Jewish press for the cause of his hate and similar things are happening now. I am also thinking of 1976 when the movie Message was first screened in America and the black American Muslims had taken hostages of a building now the same movie is being shown on cable here with Urdu dubbing, in another instance same was the case with Ten Commandments it was banned in Pakistan when it was first released in sixties but now it is being shown openly. Take the case of last temptation of Christ, a rubbish and derogatory movie about Christ. What stops the movie makers to make a porno version of Mary and birth of Jesus , it can be done in the name of free speech, after all American supreme court has ruled in 1970 that porn is a form of art yet many people have been sacked in America nd other countries for watching porn at office, is watching art a crime during working hours or a liability to seek any job. Supreme court of America has also given the verdict in 1858 that slavery is allowed and legal. The point to bring home is that one cannot live in statues and rules and these have to be amended with the ground reality.

Pakistan government has very wisely taken the side of protestors otherwise the losses would have been more.

I have to go to Bandigar tomorrow, it is located very close to the Durand Line approximately fifteen miles north east of Miranshah, the scouts had occupied it in 2001 and I want to see the area but now I am having second thoughts about this operation, who knows that tomorrow they plant an IED or carry out an ambush, after all tomorrow is not a ROD, it is risky but now it is too late to back out from this. My ears are still very tense and picks up any noise that is made outside my room as I think I

may be attacked by the intruder and I have nothing to offer a resistance. Saw Rocky 4 movie yesterday, quite a morale bosting in such environments.

Past one week has been very peaceful, played rather learning tennis, no hashish, workout and sleep. Reading the digest of service and trying to pick up pieces of last twelve years of Tochi Scouts history. Two new officers have been posted here Captain Bilal of Air Defence and captain Saad of Signal Corps , both are good and courteous especially I am very impressed with the conduct of Bilal, I am sure both of these will go very high in army. As a matter of fact all the four officers Ammad, Billa, Saad and ... are very good better than my own generation I believe. Major Ali Raj is also here , I met his Balti batman other day happy to see him, I also met another soldier of 5 squadron, he came to see me, one feels very elevated when old soldiers comes to say hello.

Tochi Scouts as usual is in fine shape, Commandant Wajahat, Major Zamir, Lt Col Rab Nawaz, Tariq, Captain Ali the doctor. I feel very comfortable and happy to see the JCO's , I met Fazal an Orakzai, best is the SM Zulfiqar a Orakzai I believe who is always very cheerful. Havildar Muhammad Shah is going for a promotion cadre next week. I myself is going to Sadda on this Sunday. Brigadier Shahid of Artillery is another very courteous officer.

Presence of Major General Ali Abbas is a strength, I had a juma prayers with him today and then long talk on religion, he is also like so many others think of me as a ripe fruit for conversion into religion, let's see what happens next, I have returned his loan of 6000, I know it won't matter much to him but to me it hurts, yet this is one lesson that I have learnt from my mother to keep your dignity intact by returning the loan.

I have Old Spice after shave and Brut roll on, one reminds me of Reena and other of Samina, in the morning I think of both when applying them. At times I feel the heartbeat of my daughter next to me, I think of my son Salik when I play tens or watch cricket. I have no emotion left in me it seems, at times I think what am I, where am I, what am I doing here and then I shrug of all these feelings. To me time has not moved rather it has stopped, I am still in illusion as my family is waiting for me back home and I am here on a duty or a posting but this is all illusion.

There is no post office here and even PA was not in picture about it when I went to his office yesterday to have some data and neither can I have a weapon license from him so that is another deadlock.

Weather is fine and as I said earlier the night was beautiful indeed. There is peace outside now, it is 0200 hours now and let me get some sleep now.

22 September 2012

I had little sleep and worried rather scared of the forthcoming event, the alarm in the mobile went on at 0530 and then the waiter came to wake me up, I had a bit of mental appreciation and there was only one scene coming up in my mind, a blown up car in which I am sitting; not a very bright idea to start your day. I had the option to simply say that I am not going and then go off for a sleep but in the end I hurriedly shaved, I am not using any foam rather the ordinary soap and it works perfectly well. Had tea outside on the bench. At 0610 Captain Saad came out bit late but it's okay. There were

two vehicles parked in the mess area one a new Toyota Vigo and other two door Land Cruiser, there were armed Scouts in both. I was given the newer vehicle all to myself, I knew that Commandant has made sure that I travel in style and comfort. In normal scenario it would have been great but now I thought it from another angle that by sitting in this vehicle I become the prime target, any way after the parade state near the stadium vehicles moved, Captain Saad told me that my vehicle will be the fourth in this almost nine vehicles convoy including an ambulance. The driver was Mohammad Hussain an Orakzai.

I inquired about the purpose of the trip and it revealed that there is a track leading to Bandigar which needs improvement and Tochi had asked for the dozer but the 7 Division had insisted on carrying out the reconnaissance first to judge the merit, thus grade two officer {operations} Major Shahid and Lieutenant Faisal of 105 Engineers Battalion were also part of the convoy all in all we were over forty in numbers. The convoy was impressive in terms of fire power and grandeur, I felt the impact and on the other hand none can stop an IED or an ambush if carried out by the Taliban; that was my major and only worry. We took the route from the northern edge passing through the dusty training area of scouts where the recruits were practising for their pass out parade. Three drill instructors were busy in imparting the knowledge, recruits dressed in trousers and faded khaki t shirts were performing the usual chore of raising the leg as high as possible and then hitting it hard, they were wearing the camouflage soft sole shoes. The route leads out on the Miranshah – Ghulam Khan Road, the very first moment on the road or outside the defence perimeters are very tense. The procedure is that the leading vehicles dropped their men who protects the route and the last vehicle picks them up, I later learnt that the leading vehicle also carries the bomb disposal party but more about that later on.

This was my first time on this road, I have been watching it for last ten weeks from the fort, I saw the high mud bricks towers which are reportedly madrassah of Jalal Haqqani an operation was carried out here in 2002 and in preceding years it was punished heavily. The madrassah is on the west side in the green belt. By and large the general perception is that Haqqani is pro Pakistan, a good thing but you cannot be assure of that nothing evil will happen today. The first interaction with people is strange, I saw two boys going to school then more of the kids in colourful caps but all wearing militia uniform. Men were mostly wearing white dress all having beard and turbans. Few shops were open with fruits and vegetables and grocery, similar to any other scene in frontier, why I have not said Punjab is because Punjab is densely populated. Few of the men had long hair in Taliban style carrying weapons, mostly sitting and just chatting. The leading vehicle of our convoy had another task and that was to make sure that vehicles of locals are parked away from the road to keep a suicide bomber away. The scenery is rather wide it is not a narrow valley, road is generally okay it more of a track passing through the algid and ravines. I had conversation with the driver Hussain and we chatted about the operations he had taken part there was another guard in the rear seat by the name of Aslam and then two gun men in the rear open cabin. The area west of Miranshah through which I am passing now is called Saidgi and is known as Dande Plains, it is here that all the water channels pour out from the mountains and forms a large fan of water veins, since it is mostly dry thus there is no fear of flood but in case it rain heavily then there is a real danger. A dam has been constructed in Saidgi area to store the water.

I waved to all the men who were sitting on the road side or waiting in their parked cars which all are Toyota and non-custom paid and white in colour. I put my window glass down which were tainted and tinted. The people responded rather in a delaying action by either nodding their head or responding with their hand, it breaks the ice and atleast lessen my fear which now had subsided but still you cannot take anything granted here, there were few speed breakers where my anxiety would

increase because speed slows down and gives ample time to anyone to shoot or ram his vehicle into us. I saw women for the first time, in all the three valleys that I have travelled this seemed more open, these were powindahs who were wearing very colourful clothes mostly red, ruby and dark blue long kurta and had a shawl wrapped around their face but they were the signs of life and colour in the otherwise dreary scenery. I saw women sitting in the back of tractor trolley with men travelling towards the Miranshah probably for medical reasons. There were camels and sheep and big powindahs dogs as well roaming around. There were also tents pitched here and there also semi mud huts. This is Saidgai area, by this point we had travelled almost twenty minutes and I was more comfortable now yet the fear was there.

We passed through Dande Plains a stony area which is the bone of contention among the Daur and Wazir tribes. We reached Ghulam Khan and I was surprised at the close proximity it is only seventeen kilometres away from Miranshah, elevation is almost a thousand feet more than Miranshah, since the sun was on my right rising thus I concentrated on the west side and I found area and people different more dense as compared to the Boya, similarities are with Saidgi area near Idak. Ghulam Khan is on a height and then track drops down to the vast parking area of trucks, it is the last place where Afghan trucks come from Afghanistan and Pakistan trucks from our side and both exchange goods here very few travels beyond this point.

I had the option of either staying at Wing HQ or moving forward towards the Bandigar, I opted for Bandigar, I asked Hussain as to what is the meaning of Bandigar and his answer was that in Pashto Bandi is a shrub from which charas is made and I rejected the explanation as no charas is made here probably it is an Persian word.

The track leading to Bandigar is stony, it drops down considerably and we had to cross an algid which was running with water, saw few boys swimming in it, we then had to climb up through a steep with sharp bends track. The convoy stopped for the engineers' reconnaissance, we all remained idle for ten minutes, there was a motorcycle with two riders both natives and I could feel their anxiety as they were surrounded by over forty armed men taking pictures of the area after some time they were allowed to proceed further. Where we were standing there was a nomadic house down below where a woman was busy in preparing something and she kept on doing what she was doing earlier. Frontier Works Organisation FWO is making a road that will connect the Bannu with Ghulam Khan and onwards to the Khost in Afghanistan it is very important project and Army chief General Kayani announced and opened the project in July 2011 in a Jirga in Ghulam Khan the completion date is July 2013. It is very risky and dangerous task as the builders and labourers are all exposed to the firing but this by itself explains the tribal culture that the Gurbuz Tribe in whose area the road is being constructed has shown no hostility because this is already bringing the prosperity in terms of labour and will further enhance the trade. The labourers are mainly from Lakki Marwat area and the establishment of nomadic camps is also related to the construction of road. Day was hot but work was going on. This was a very route for the smugglers and it was occupied by the scouts in 2002. During this halt I observed the drills of the squad they all were out of their vehicles and faced towards the east because on west there is a high ground. I inquired about the water bottles and Hussain told me that they have been issued with it but none carries it. Thus we all had no water at all, I pointed out to him how important it is to carry the water on body as anything can happen, and he nodded in affirmation.

We drove forward now I had the Major Rashid as the co passenger I vacated the front seat for him, we army officers are very touchy about this protocol, a serving officer definitely gets priority over a retired officer so I had no qualms over it and this gesture made him comfortable. He had done a year course in bomb disposal in America thus I asked him to explain me the nitty gritty of the bomb

disposal. He highlighted that as per teaching you cannot clear more than a kilometre of the track in a day but we do almost hundred kilometres a day. I in my heart of heart had always been praising the bomb disposal parties because the leading two men who actually perform the mission require nerves of steel to carry out this operation. The procedure is that a jammer vehicle is also operating with these two men which jams remote control signals not always successful, then there are different kinds of IED like one which is timed related and then it can be pressure operated where the weight of your step can detonate it so it is very risky and not fool proof that is why it makes these bomb disposers very special people, I confessed my appreciation for Corps of Engineers they really perform miracles.

The track which we were following is not the original track rather it was made after occupation of the area by the Scouts, there are remnants of other tracks on the eastern side down below, and area is similar to the one around Abbottabad. Gentle slopes on the eastern side little greenery no high tree only shrubs which have come up due to rains in last month otherwise it is dreadful. Track is narrow with sharp bends an ideal place to lay an ambush. Saw three men walking down with a woman they again in my opinion are heading towards the Miranshah for medical reason, somehow the other there seems to be no other reason that comes to the mind when one sees a woman walking out other than this which I have stated. It is these walks among these rough areas that make these people tough.

There are remnants of old deserted Afghan refugee camps or it could be the sites of labourers who made this track. We reached the Bandigar post, the fort is a mile ahead. The track leading to the post has a very high gradient and the space itself at post is not enough to have parking area for two vehicles thus we left one vehicle mid-way with guard and now myself, Major Rashid, Captain Saad and one subedar with a rough beard and manners reached the post. Vehicle was parked hundred meters below and we moved up on feet.

Bandigar Post is almost on the Durand Line, a small post which was built in 2003 initially it was manned by the Baluch Regiment but now wholly by Tochi Scouts. It is on a ridge thus had three layers of living and weapon trenches, on a nearby ridge is the heli pad. Scouts gave us familiarisation with the area in front are the Afghan posts which looks quite tide and built in a fort style having adjoining observation posts also. There is one recoilless rifle one 12.7 machine gun and rest all are the small arms. Water is brought up from below with the help of a mule which has a separate bunker. Fresh ration is provided once in a week by the contractor. Scouts immediately got one hen slaughtered for us, there is no electricity here but communication system seems to be quite good, it is in the form of wireless. There is a mosque built by these troops here, a kind of kitchen garden also where they have planted few vegetables which were shown to me. There is barbed fence all around but overall the post does not have any real chance of survival in front of a determined attack which by itself is not a real threat. The scouts have to go down to take a shower. The aim of the post is keep an eye on the Afghans. Miranshah is visible from here the long white strip of the airfield is an obvious landmark. Ghulam Khan and surrounding area is also open for observation as a matter of fact the location of the post and its sitting is good from observation point of view. It is standing here that I thought of the Third Afghan War when General Nadir Khan attacked MiranShah from this direction. I visited the cook house also because it is the most important place in any post. Cooks were charming and full of humour a trait which is present in all cooks. One of the cook narrated the time when Americans came here for liaison it was probably in April last year and then he showed me a picture of his with an American female officer in which he had his arms wrapped around her. After drinking tea which was not that good we all left and reached our vehicles from where we moved towards the Bangidar Fort and reached there in ten minutes, it is our last post in this sector. Located on a rather flat ground. The

fort was built in 2004 and it is not a very impressive building when it is compared to the British era construction.

There is also a Khassadar building or post similar in design to the Scouts post, there is a school building also, sepoy T... told me that this was built entirely by the scouts themselves initially the school was in an open area and all teachers were scouts, he himself taught here for three years, I inquired about the numbers of students and he said over hundred were the students. Afghan posts are all visible from here, there are two villages located on both sides of the fort in the depression down below. The post subedar a Khattak narrated that on last eid rather in the Ramadan there was a woman in the village which drank anti mouse liquid by accident and she was brought to the fort by her relatives but we could provide her only with first aid however she was taken to the Miranshah but them and she survived. They also fetch water from the stream with the help of mule however they have installed a water pump for this purpose, they also lack electricity. After having Mountain Dew we departed, the track has been improved at places by the scouts also. On our way back we stopped at Ghulam Khan which is the headquarters of No 6 Wing and commanded by Lt Col Faisal who belongs to artillery.

Ghulam Khan was occupied in 1975 and the whole compound was built later on, it is on a high ground rather on a ridge and overlooks the area, Miranshah is also visible from here and so are the adjoining areas. The main task of this wing is to keep an eye on the Afghans. It has come under attack only once in last ten years which again highlights the demographic layout of the war against terror and its repercussions. We had a fantastic breakfast at 1200 hours, crispy puris and halwa. The wing is raised with new raising instructions thus it has an authorised strength of 900 Scouts although at present it has only 600 but the authorised strength is 900.

We then drove down towards the Zero Point, where the Pakistan and Afghanistan border meets. Ghulam Khan gives the look of any medieval town where instead of horses are trucks. Afghan trucks were all of Mercedes make few were Hino also, they are also decorated in the same style as Pakistani trucks are, almost over hundred were parked, the petrol pump is a Pakistani {PSO} run company, there is also custom check point which imposes tax and collects it also from trucks, there were 28 customs personals posted here. FC is not allowed to carry out the anti-smuggling duty but yet they are bound by letter to monitor the situation which gives them a leverage to inspect any truck. Lt Col Faisal highlighted his routine, the on-going construction of road. We reached the mid of the town where there are few shops and hotels, drivers sitting idle, there was no hustle bustle that is associated with border towns like Chamman or Torkham. We have to cross a stream which is wide and had water flowing in it, it is the presence of this water which explains the parking of so many trucks at Ghulam Khan, because even our own four wheel drives had problem in crossing it, there were men who were performing **abolutions** for prayer in its muddy water and few boys were taking showers too. Our last post is located almost two hundred meters on the far side of this stream. We had a tea and also a briefing regarding the Zero point. There is a constant dispute going on regarding the actual position of the Durand Line rather the alignment of it. There were bench marks which were erected in the original marking and demarcation of it in 1895 but on my inquiry as to where is the location of the bench mark is, there was a general ignorance of its presence. I pointed out to them that it is even given on the standard maps as well and only from it that one can align it self. I was told that in May an American helicopter came in about which we had no prior knowledge, it is the same incident which Captain Ammad also narrated to me when he was performing the duty of acting wing commander here. Although the Americans had given the flight information to the Islamabad and corps was in picture but division and brigade did not know about it, it was potentially another Salala Post disaster in making but only the rational thinking on part of scouts saved the day. Coming back to the Durand

Line the issue is regarding the actual alignment, Afghans claim the zero point to be part of their territory which we deny. There is a check post here few meters away from Zero Point but without any barrier or gate, FWO intends building one here on the pattern of Torkham and Wagha.

The real issue is the crossing of the stream as we saw today that with a little water it becomes an obstacle for commercial vehicle thus without construction of any bridge it will remain a thorny issue. On another level there is nothing illogical in accepting this stream as the Durand Line at least here in this sector. It is I think this point which is the bone of contention because by accepting this stream as the alignment of border the area of Bandigar also becomes part of Afghanistan. Which apparently is not acceptable to Pakistan.

23 September 2012

A normal day which I spent going through the books and in the library, Tochi have a very fine library and perhaps the only library where I can have tea and a smoke together. Sitting in the library glazing at all the all the books ranging from Russo – Japanese war to magazines I cannot resist to but to recall the other two great libraries in fact three, the university of Glasgow, university of James Madison and National defence university, the last library is the most dysfunctional in nature as it has nothing, not even a genuine window programme. Glasgow is the most impressive and JMU is the most cooperative. But coming to this small mess library, I noticed that on one of the shelf the RAF Lib is still painted in white, to me it is a great discovery as it confirms that nothing has been changed in this library in last sixty years, because had there been any change they would have changed it into at least PAF but retaining the RAF simply means that where as modifications have taken place in all parts of the fort and mess this has escaped the eyes of all commanders, a sad reflection in a different perspective.

Pakistan played its first T20 match at Pallekelle and won it by 14 runs, they batted well and I left it after their innings was finished and went to the tennis courts but the pickers were not there probably watching match, the game was on on the clay court, did little bit of weight lifting and then came back to room. I had all the intentions of calling Reena but then laziness took me over. Last night in dreams I saw my wife and for hours I was mesmerised by her thoughts, I recalled how nice she was to me and how untiring she worked, I feel guilty and remorseful, saw my daughter and son in dreams and it makes me very weak in heart. I went to Ali Abbas room but he was asleep thus I left the laptop with his batman, I had been invited by him for a tea break at 1100 hours at his office but I have to leave tomorrow for Bannu thus I rang his staff Lt Col Umar who was very polite and insisted on my staying back but it is not possible that I should stay or even delay the convoy for a tea break. Later at night I read the account of Naib subedar Sher Alam Khattak, a sixty pages account dating from his induction in scouts in 1990. It reminds me of the diary of Sita Ram that was published in 1860 and to date remains the only account of a native officer of military service under British, Sher Alam's account is no less interesting and it has happened with Sita Ram it needs editing. The salient feature of Sher Alam's account is the fact that he maintained a diary all these years. He highlights how he joined the scouts what was the affair of the Hiace from Bannu – Miranshah {it was Rs 12 in 1991} why Haji Saadullah is known as Haji Murghi and the events of war against terror, he was present at data Khel when 54 rockets were fired in one single day in July 2007 and also the convoy that had two ambushes and two IED's it had to face in the same month while moving from data Khel to Miranshah in same month. I noticed one very interesting fact, Sher had noted how much money he has been sending to his home and he has been sending Rs 10,000 to his father to run the house and Rs 1000 to his mother and Rs 2000 to his wife, thus these pathans like any one else loves their wife more than they do to their mother, an interesting fact. His account gives a social insight into the ordinary life pattern of the

scouts , how they live, how they interact with each other, mre will be written about his account inlater days.

At the dawn of new millennium there was little change in Tochi Valley from the previous millennium other than the electricity and roads which brought certain fragments of civilisation. The most visible signs of civilisations seen in the agency were the new weapons; AK-47 Kalashnikov automatic light machine gun being the most favourite followed by shoulder fire Rocket Propelled Grenade Launcher-7.

24 September 2012

I am sitting at Bannu Tochi Serai, I came from Miranshah in the morning with Captain Saad ina hired Toyota car an old model with the convoy. I met Ali in the morning at his room he was getting ready for the office , I thanked him for the tae break invitation and then at 1100 hours we left , Mohammad shah is also leaving for Bannu as he has to go for the promotion course at Jalozai. There was a usual chaos at the Road operating day ground, a dusty ground with over twenty vehicles. The driver a Tori Khel Wazir of sixty years of age was talkative and disgruntled person , a cribber of highest order and I had to give him ashut up call and also to check his speed. But by and large I talked to him and updated myself on the area. Contrary to my own knowledge the area down below Miramshah till Bannu is not inhabited by the Dauris rather on the west the area is under control of Wazirs, different clans and on east is inhabited by Dauris with intermingled pockets of Wazirs in between. As we left Miranshah the first town is Aisha Post, then Spalga the village of Ipi and then Idak , I was shown the high mud fort of NWF which is still functional it seems, then Mirali and finally we entered into Bannu Frontier Region which is all occupied by Bakka Khel { Wazir}. Weather was hot and dusty and as such I think the qualities of pictures might not be that good. FWO was all working and after having visit the Bandigar I am deeply impressed by them, I saw them working in excessive heat on the making of road and supervising it. Over all the entire road is broken and most of the time we travelled on the dusty track, luckily the tyres of the vehicles held their ground. Also saw the powindahs with their camels, thesecamels mostly the young siblings tend to travel in the middle of the road where as the mature ones were mostly busy eating the shrubs. Army was deployed enroute but still I think it is ot enough. It was sad to see the troops sitting the rear of hired trucks without wearing any helmet and with their clothes hanging . We were checked twice but that took place in Bannu FR for the reason that we by that time became the leading vehicle courtesy of Driver's fast driving. But it was gain only customary and lone soldier saluted Captain Saad without even checking his identification, a bad and dangerous culture.

Subedar Hidayat a Wazir is incharge of Bannu Serai a very neat, clean and efficient person , he has a beard but without any moustaches. I requested him to get me Mazari cloth , which he promptly went and bought and also bought the Bannu Woollen cloth , but the Mazari is not original and woollen cloth I am afraid is not enough for me to make a suit, but he will get it changed. Rang Ammad, Umar and Tiger. There was a miss call from father; it gives a lot of strength to know that at least he remembers me. In the evening I went for awalk with Saad to the cantonment.

Bannu cantonment as we walked past the rear headquarters of forward battalion, 12 FF , 28 Baluch and some odd Punjab Regiments, a sad commentary on their living, the area in front was abundant with wild growth, dirty barracks and even more dirty cook houses. This comes as no surprise because the area in the close vicinity of army chief's house in Rawalpindi presented the same

scene in 2003; it has improved a little now. Bannu in good old days was supposed to be and was actually a recreation place for forward troops but now it is chaotic. It requires little effort to improve the living environments of the area but cutting the grass and planting the flowers and benches and overall having a more hygienic living. An army is not only known by the equipment it keeps but also through these aspects one can make out the morale of the troops. It was evening thus no need of light but I am certain that none can walk here at night and under any emergency it will be chaotic. Having said this the Bannu Cantonment gives the look of yesteryears of Peshawar cantonment, old trees wild growth of shrubs on path ways, vast expanse of empty grounds, old building structures. It was constructed in 1856 onwards and still few barracks are functional, although majority are of 1900 circa. We entered Combined Military Hospital area, a well kept and well lighted area, having a proper guide map with light, pleasant to notice it. My mind raced to my brother in law who served here in 2000. Area opposite the CMH is deserted in nature with two old barracks having verandah, these by their design looks to be the oldest in construction.

I had no intention of having the dinner but Subedar Hidayat invited me have or rather joined their Dastar Khawan, these Scouts have very romantic names like Serai, Dastar Khawan and so on.. On the floor there was a long mat, with over hundred scouts sitting on both sides having their food, I was invited to occupy the head area. I am impressed with the cleanliness and standard of food, chicken and bananas with curd. I told Hidayat sahib that it is the best that I have seen so far in the Bannu cantonment and it is fact. Later after the food, he showed me the area, neat and clean washroom and above all a proper drainage system for the water waste of cook house, I am not off the mark if I say that it is the first time I have seen any cook house without cats loitering around and no standing water. He also showed me the room for the sweepers and believe me it has carpet and fan in it, something very rare in army.

Later I read and still is reading Line of Fire by General Musharraf, I have read it before but reading it again to update myself with the war against terror time line. Interesting account, it is nostalgic in nature as I have seen all this very closely and by reading his narrative my mind raced back to Samina when we would both discuss the events of the day. It took me back to the rotary wing crew room where Khalid Rana and myself were the only officers who would cut joke at his modern enlightenment, it all seemed yesterday but years have passed by now. Azadeh and Salik raced to my mind as we were in Gujranwala and Rawalpindi during most of his tenure. Not a bad president but then he himself admits that one needs to have a unity of command to govern this country. Otherwise his account is full of contradictions of character and history. I am more interested in his account of Kargil affairs which I think he is quite justified in claiming as victory but then again it is the political leadership which has to decide whether a country needs to have a war or not.

25 September 2012

1145 hours, we are stranded at Tangai Chowk, short of Karak, because our troop carrier vehicle an Isuzu small truck has developed a fault, it is heating up and it is due to the dysfunctional fan, a mistri is now working on it and Captain Saad has coordinated with the rear for a replacement vehicle, benefits of mobile telephone; it will take almost an hour and half for it to reach here. We are parked next to Daewoo bus stop opposite a CNG pump, weather is not very hot.

The journey from Bannu up till now is quite fascinating, as one comes out of Bannu and travels on the road leading to the Indus highway the area is absolutely flat, as flat as a billiard table, initially it has desert like terrain with date trees also but then on both sides of the road it is flat, fertile with occasional trees and sparse population, the main problem is lack of water, it is mainly the bed of old water streams which are wide and vast, it is sufficient enough to feed the entire Afghanistan. On a

historical note Bannu area has attracted old Afghan rulers from 1000 AD onwards and after seeing it with my own eyes I am convinced that it is true, Sikhs also ruled it for long. After getting on at Indus Highway which is a very good road the scenery remains the same and it gradually that the scene changes with area becoming greener with more orchards and area becoming broken. The mountains also become visible on the right of the road and beyond the mountains is the Indus. Last time I travelled was on the road leading from Bannu towards the Kohat on the old road where the visibility was bit restricted. Our vehicle is now rectified and we intend moving on it forward.

2230 hours Thall Fort. Lying in Alizai room, the very fort where I came in 1992, fond memories of good ole days, I came in Alouette helicopter with Captain Rizwan Zalim, I was not qualified on the machine but acted as navigator, we picked brigade commander of Bannu and then came here and stayed the night or probably it was brigade commander of Thall Brigade I am not sure. I remember that I saw a tree planted by Fatima Jinnah, I saw it again, it has not grown up in all these years. Sat for hours in the mess lawn and watched birds of all kinds, ducks, peacock, pigeons, pheasants and also deer, beautiful wildlife caged and fed. Then came a horde of children of officers who played cricket and behaved not much different from the birds. Fun to watch them, mentally I saw Salik and Azadeh among them. Children are of all age and I travelled through the time line among them. I remember the time when I came here last, Samina was major then and we were staying in Corps Mess, wonderful memories of bygone days. I think I sat on the bench till darkness, when I was here last time I think I had hashish then but not now.

The journey from Karak onwards was uneventful, passed through the Lacchi home town of my friend Khattak, I have been here many times, then Kohat. We bought Guavas from a road vendor who were in line, Kohat is famous for them but I found nothing special in them. Samina's father was base commander here and I thought of her when must have been here and passed through the same road as I am passing now. Had a telephone call from tiger. The road is okay and scenery is good. The valley is wide and fertile with low level mountains running parallel. I passed through this valley in 1985 when I was a subaltern and my battery was deployed at Parachinar and today after a gap of quarter of century I am travelling again. Not much has changed in these years, the road was as good or bad as it is today and also the general layout is also same. One major change is the railway line, there used to be a narrow gauge railway on which I travelled then but now it has become extinct now. I noticed it from Kohat onwards, the track is broken and at places almost gone, a sad affair indeed.

We passed through the Shia and Sunni strongholds and these signs are visible everywhere, this area is always volatile in nature in terms of sectarian riots. The Shias have placed chalking highlighting their faith and equally I saw the Sunnis constructing grand mosques and tableghi centres being established this no way out, it will only enhance and fuel the fire. In Skardu and Gilgit similar situation prevails. The area is beautiful and its greenery and fertility is in sharp contrast to the barren nature of Tochi Valley. One is reminded of the early British era when Ross Keepels raised the Kurram Militia and moved forward, I thought of him how he must have rode in this area. The people are not that fiery or militant as they are in Tochi, the major tribe is Orakzai and Turi, Turis are all Shias and Orakzais are mixed in faith. We passed rather bypassed the Hangu the most violent city after Parachinar. The Shias have built a beautiful and grand mosque on top of a mound, it is similar to the Mormon Church near the Washington when one is travelling on Highway 81 towards Virginia. Population density is more but still bearable, all in all the area also resembles the Islamabad in scenery and I wondered that only if the security is improved then an excellent and beautiful place to live. We were not carrying our haversack a bad habit among the scouts and soldiers, it used to be a standard pattern in eighties and nineties but I have noticed that these scouts are casual in nature, they were not carrying even water. Thus a long day without any edible, in good ole days they would have

stopped at any place and bought their lunch but that is not possible in present security environments. Anyway Captain Saad had a stop at upper Darwazai a small town with a bank and bought some sweets and Mountain Dew, I am fed up of Mountain Dew and prefer simple water which I am carrying in the vehicle. I hope Captain Saad will learn something from this venture, he is a technical graduate and have spent four years in a university and now serving in a corps signal unit and on attachment with Tochi Scouts, I am sure this attachment will go a long way in broadening his horizon, it helped me when I was a subaltern. You learn what to wear and what to carry and more important what to eat in such areas and then what is important to carry. The driver drives fast and bit reckless, they have a habit of blowing horn unnecessarily without having any regard for the vehicle in front whether it has any space to give to let him to overtake, a kind of cultural mindset, same habit was displayed by that civilian driver while driving us from Miranshah to Bannu, it is risky and they have to be constantly reminded of this but it requires time and constant monitoring. I have forgotten to highlight that at Karak where we were repairing our truck, we were approached by a civilian driver in a white Toyota car, he introduced himself as a retired military transport havildar of Khyber rifles and offered his help, he bought us Pepsi, so this is the kind of bondage one draws among the scouts and uniform personals.

We reached Thall fort at 1600 hours, and Captain Saad left and I stayed here. The fort is impressive one of the most impressive in nature, it has lot of resemblances in term of layout and construction atleast in terms of entrance with the Cherat Fort and also with Razmak. This fort and Razmak were constructed in same time period also Khaosora and spinawam were constructed in same time period that is post 1922 or more precisely in 1932. It is not easy to destroy a fort of such magnitude and strength. I have seen it from air and now from ground too. In 1992 I had visited an outpost also {picquets} which is magnificent in nature.

The mess has been renovated in 2006, which includes tiling and layout, it has as a matter of fact caused more damage than good, for instance my room now has sealed windows and I cannot have any access to fresh air and this have to rely upon the air conditioned, high ceilings have been done with false ceilings but over all you cannot renovate this mess, it was more classy in its original layout then now. Only Aitchison College in Lahore has the distinction of retaining the original layout from 1890 till now, rest all military establishments have become victims of personal whims and designs. I am not very happy with the Thall Scouts, the tea is not good, the attitude of waiters is pathetic, the flush tank of my room is broken and this speaks of only negligence of mess secretary. It is probably due to the high standards set by the Tochi that I am having such feelings otherwise in army aviation mess the sink which was broken in 2006 is still in the same condition in Room No 10 on ground floor.

I had a walk around the fort, this {Thall Scouts} does not observe retreat with a bugle. Another thing which I noticed is their faded insignias at their entrance, too many paintings of Mrs Wajahat Malik adoring the mess giving it a look of a restaurant rather than a mess. Pakistan has won the T20 match against the Bangladesh still Amir Sohail is having his sarcastic remarks, it seems the man cannot have any positive or good words and always see the dark side. Obama the Nigger spoke at UNO in which he said that no insulting speech can cause violence, it is freedom of expression that is why I am writing him as nigger, it is after all freedom of expression. He {nigger} is confused he cannot understand one simple fact that human reacts differently to different kinds of insult, after all the majority of homicides in world over are caused by the anger which we feel, it is this feeling which makes a soldier go and launch himself on an enemy. If I take his freedom of expression philosophy on its face then what stops the Wazirs to demand the expulsion of the Americans or the mullahs to instil the sense of jihad in people. But to the Nigger only the American version and principles are the only

thing that are correct and rest of the world is ignorant and as such cannot decide any thing of their own. It is this attitude which caused two great world wars and will surely led us to another unless and until we start respecting the varying cultures. The Americans can have freedom of expression by portraying Jesus nude and with prostitutes in more grotesque manner but don't expect the others to have same tolerance level for their prophets and unless we reach a compromise we will keep on having clash of cultures and civilisations.

26 September 2012, 1855 hours.

Sitting rather lying in the wing headquarters of No 1 Wing, it is a old room a proper old room constructed almost hundred years in the traditional pattern of the natives with mud plastered walls, roof is made of wood lumbers and sticks of local trees which I have been told is very strong and is used instead of cement, it is creaking , the room is like the Shigar Fort room but it is original , I had the option of staying in Lt Col Qaiser's room which is rather new construction but I prefer staying here.

In the morning I was up by 0730 the water was cold , tea luke warm and toast stiff. I gave my piece of mind to the waiter called for bill, paid it{Rs 192 for meal and service charges} and sat in the lawn watching the birds. Peacocks wee out and ducks fighting as usual as yesterday, pigeons were not seen. Ducks have apeculiar habit that all of a sudden one or two out of them will pick a fight among themselves and then they will run wild. I read in Musharraf's book that during his meeting with Chinese head of state, the Chinese gave him a piece of advice regarding the investors that investors behave like pigeons, on the first sign of danger they all fly away but when the trust is restored then they will come one by one. I observed it yesterday and found it absolutely correct. Later I went to the CMH merely because the hospital reminds me of my wife Samina. I went to second in commands office a Major Raja , a courteous officer , I requested him that I want to the pictures of AMC badge painted outside the hospital. He candidly asked for my identification which I gave then he went to his commanding officer's office rather acting because the real one is in Peshawar, later he came and politely asked me whether I have taken any other pictures in the fort which I replied in affirmative. I was enjoying it because I knew that the classical military security system is now working, he has gone to his CO to inform him and get his permission who in turn had asked him to contact the brigade, as he rang DAA & QMG who was not in his chair, I cheerfully asked him that I don't need the pictures and then we both had a laugh and later after having a cup of tae I left , subedar ... was waiting for me outside I was happy to see a Tochte.

We later went towards the brigade to fetch the ration, subeadr was anxious and said that he can come agin as I am getting late but I assured him that I have all the time in world so take your time but I shouldnot be the excuse for you to come here again , he understood the message and later dropped the idea that it is not important. All the scouts wthout exception were busy in using mobiles, my driver said that since mobiles are not working at Sadd athus they all make full use of it here. I took more pictures of the fort and later we drove out from the Thall.

Thall was bustling with life vendors selling items on the roadside, rows of Suzuki pickup waiting for the passengers, food being prepared, nothing has changed here in last two decades. Scenary very green and area fertile and population quite dense. WE drove in a convoy one in which I was sitting other carrying scouts with a machine gun mounted { mine also had the same} and third was the civil pick up carrying three mules and two donkeys. Road is fairly good, the valey opens up and is very wide, I could see the snow clad mounatins in the far distance, the very first snow of the season. The town are again classified as shia and sunni, some of the towns are built on the banks of the river and are raelly old and some on the side of road which have new construction. All along I

noticed khassadars and levies at regular distance, system is working. I was keen to see the gate of Kurram Valley which is known as Kharlachi, I saw it on a old sketch with a note that names to be entered here but driver told me that it is still away. Boys and children coming back from school wearing militia uniform, I am again distressed at the change of Scouts uniform from militia dress, it looks odd in this environment. The police also wears the same dress at certain places so quite a confusion, I waved hands to all. The traffic is quite dense, Toyota hiace plying between the Kohat and Parachinar, quite a number of women among them. I have noticed that the women are more frequent in this valley, also saw few boards announcing the uplift area and projects of European Union but it is like salt in flour, surprisingly all the boards are in new conditions without any graffiti. On the other hand uncountable graffiti in favour of Maulana Fazal Ur Rehman and quite a number of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf flags. Graffiti and slogans of all kind but almost all are religious in nature less PTI which aims at corruption also saw few flags of PPP but no mention of the premier or president. One slogan aims and claims that we will instill the hate against Americans in all the children. We finally reached the Gate to Kurram Valley an impressive gate with plenty of khassadars, they are mostly very young in age, fair colour and gives innocent looks but people obeys them. Our JCO was quite arrogant with the natives during road jams and bottlenecks, it is difficult to teach them that this is not the way to win the hearts and minds of people which in any case he is not pushed or cared about. In the agency none is carrying weapon and all in all people looks quite docile in nature. We passed the Arawali Fort another fort of grandeur and having an air strip I believe. Arawali was quite famous during the Afghan war, Captain Rizwan Now Brigadier stayed here with the newly acquired Stinger missiles in 1985. Now we were in Sunni dominating area after Arawali comes Sakhi Ahmeed Shah Kalle then Shashu K, Shastu, Warsak Kalle, Durrani Chotta and finally Sadda. It is as usual as it was in 1985, the kebabs were being fried and I have only this memory of this town of old journey and I noticed the same today as well. The square in Sadda is named as Emir Mawaiyyah, a controversial figure in Islamic history, naming a square with a high monument after his name is like showing a red flag to a bull. Shias hate none more than him and to me it is inviting them rather throwing a gauntlet to them, inciting them and during Muharram it is like adding petrol to a fire. We turned right, there is vast tent city on the plains which used to be old Afghan refugee camp it is now being used as a camp for displaced people of Daddar. We had stopped at one of the No 1 wing post near the degree college. There is a road block with a female warden present along with a male, she was all covered in veil.

A classic road and track journey from Sadda to Daggar where the wing headquarters is situated. Mud plastered villages hosting the black and white stripes flag with one odd Pakistan flag in between. Shops were opened, the names changed here like Mamozai. I am not sure about the demographic nature of the area. We followed a road which runs parallel to Khurmana Nullah, road is at quite an elevation, area is lush green and fertile, occasional traffic comprising of pick ups and cars mostly non custompaid having FATA number plates. As we made ingress into the valley the area becomes more open, only one odd bottle neck but still plenty of ambush sites. Houses are all mud plastered and we passed through them with children waving including small girls, it is almost similar to the area close to Skardu and beyond it. If only the security issue is taken away then this place is tourist paradise. We crossed the Khurmana Nullah at Dwa Toi and finally reached Daggar, it is situated next to the algaad on high ground. The very first person I met was the subedar major Ashna Gul the same very person whom I met at Boya while he was unceremoniously being sent to the No 1 Wing. From road the track leads upwards in a steep ascent, I was bit scared but driver assured me and we reached the top. Parked the Toyota single cabin and walked further up where the Wing Commander Lieutenant Colonel Qaiser of 52 Cavalry was standing. A chubby officer with a short beard, he welcomed me I fully understand that any serving officer is always bit apprehensive about a

retired officer who comes to his kingdom and is senior in service but junior in rank but after a smoke, tahnks he smoke we talked about the project and I agve him a run down addressing him as sir. I found him a pleasnt company , energetic and having positive attitude towards the life, service and what all he is doing here. He immediately took me on a drive towards the Dakka Pass which is quite near and we passed through the Daggar village . He was driving himself and we had a full escort, the village was once a flourishing place but now in half ruins.

This part of Kurram is known as Central Kurram and is part of Orakzai Tribe with Mamuzai sub clan inhabiting the area, the operation to clear the area is code name as Opeartion Mamuzai.

Qaiser took me to the edge of the road where it finishes and turns into a track with a pass known as Dappa Pass. I saw two old women walking on the other bank of Khurmannanullah, it immediately brought back the reflection of Skardu and adjoining valleys. We were in the hostile area with chances of fire coming from anywhere quite bright, neither myself nor Qaiser were wearing any protective jacket but our escort was fully armed and they walked ahead and fanned the area. Qaiser showed me the Chile Sar peak , a major operation took place here in January 2012 in which this wing occupied the whole feature in one night a reminiscence of Iblanke Ridge operation of 1939. We stayed for time a quiet and beautiful palce, water is muddy and afst flowing. We drove back and from Daggar village we turned towards the Khurmana Nullah and crossed it quiet a feat with fast flowing water , a tribute to Toyota car manufacturer. We climbed up and followed a dusty track and drove up and up and Qaiser told me that how this area was cleared of insurgents and how he established hios post here in one night and later the post came under 22 attacks in a span of two weeks in which two scouts were killed and many more injured. We stopped near the Sammu killi post , it had started drizzling and I was amazed that all the scouts had the rain coats including one for me. Qaiser noted my appreciation and said that he had got 300 of these raincoats made from wing fund and then stitched them according to his requirement having a zipper and buttons as well. The post subeadr came down he looked in quite a high morale fully armed and dressed. I saw the bullets holes and later we all turned back and drove to our headquarters adopting a different track yet we had to cross the nullah. We passed through the village and reached our post which is known as three pimples. Had a hearty lunch comprising of rice and chicken curry and then green tea and a smoke. Qaiser offered his prayers while I just ventured upstairs and stepped into the field mess, The mess havildar Rafique introduced me to his staff and later I came to know that he had taken part in the Swat Peration of 1995 I shared some of my knowledge with him and we agreed to have a another sitting to get his personal views on that operation.

Qaiser and myself alongwith Rafique climbed up to the command post which is nothing more than a tent and few bunkers at the top from where I had a good view of the whole valley and later his one staff NCO who had atkenpart in the Cahlo Sar operation gave me the account. The valley is divided into two wings which both joins together provided if you cross the nullah . The no 1 Wing was inducted here from Dir operation in October 2011 after travelling a distance of 550 kilometers , they had covered an equal distance from Miranshaha to reach the Dir and after taking part in Chitral Opeartions moved here. Initially they had one month training at sadda and tahl where Qaisr practiced the firing nad other field crafts and then they came here at Three pimples. It was the start of phase two of the opeartions. In the first phase the lower Kurram Valley was cleared from the miscreants rather the Orakzai Agency was cleared. The agency does not share any physical contact with the Durand Line. The miscreants actually gathere here from Khyber and Kurram Agency and Daggar became their centre point. They started living here and offered resistance to any ingressing force. The very first time when qaiser's wing came here it was stoned by the locals still a far cry from the Tochi and wazirs where the same welcome would have been in the form of small arms fire. Over all the area and

agency looks not as militant as tochi, they don't carry arms and weapons, houses construction is not as fortified as there, before the incoming of army and scouts there were schools but overall the agency remained secluded. I saw women folk walking or looking after the animals although covered but not in a shuttle cock burqa. Daggar village was the arms purchasing centre but now all the shops have been destroyed. No 1 wing had the responsibility to occupy the both ridges and high features astride the Kharmanna nullah. The features are not steep rather gentle and are in layers with thick jungle at places and also having the bald green patches. Talibans were living and are still living on the high features and some of them have been cleared but not all thus there is always a chance of them attacking. The posts are at height in excess of 8000 feet which is the snow line. They got the first snow in January 2012 by that time they had cleared and occupied the features.

Later at night I had the dinner at qaisers bunker, Biryani and curry alongwith potato cutlets and curd and ending with green tea. Saw the television but I requested him to change the channel as I have no stomach for the Geo and other bizarre channels which have nothing but sensation and pessimism. Saw pictures on Qaiser's computer, only some of them are worth printing in the book.

My roof is constantly creaking and I am not sure where is the toilet and where is the awash room. This bunker is reminiscent of old ack ack adys of Sargodha and paarchinar. Clothes hanging on a wire, books lying around, this is the bunker of a captain who is on leave, same old stuff Dale Carnegie's 'How to win friends and influence people' a copy of John Grisham's 'The partners' a copy of religious prayers, few medicines. I cannot make out whether the occupant is married or a bachelor but this much I know that he is also from cavalry. A pedestal fan, a prayer rug, a small wall hanging mirror, steel helmet, telescope, bullet proof vest but no weapon is in sight. Two energy saves are hanging from the roof, room or bunker has a green carpet an old mess of mass electric wires, a small window, two tubular cots, I am using one of them, sorry I have a wooden bed with foam mattress. The size of bunker is ten by ten, there is an adjoining room also and then stairs that leads up, all mud built and then outside stony sloopy ground. It was a local house which remained under use of Kurram Militia and now under Tochi. Outside weather is cloudy and chilly with drizzling.

27 September 2012, 0945 hours

I was up at 0700 hours but remained in the bed, night was calm initially there were few sounds of firing and I thought here I go again but then I wandered into sleep, I had a thought that in case if the roof collapses then what are my chances of survival. In the morning I rang field mess on inter com number 812 for a cup of tea, the waiter brought it and spill it luckily the computer was saved. Then another attendant came and informed me that warm water is ready for a bath, I inquired about the location of washroom and he informed me it is next door. I went there it is a bright and sunny day, it is only meant for taking shower but not for toilet, I searched around and a sweeper in khaki kameez shalwar came shook my hand and then guided me to the toilet, it is bit far away, eastern style with corrugated sheets and semi open. The air was filled with the sounds of children reciting their lessons in near by school. Later I took shower and now had my shave in the bunker with just a razor blade no soap or water. I am waiting for my clothes which the attendant has taken down for pressing with the help of a coal iron.

2300 hours. The power supply is off, there is electricity provided by the government but it is erratic but not as bad as in Punjab during summer. The wing operates its own generator from 1900 – 2300 hours same as in Boya. I just watched two fascinating games of cricket, Sri Lanka beat New Zealand and West Indies defeated England and it was in last match I saw a fascinating piece of fielding by Pollard when he saved a six by throwing the ball back into arena after jumping over the boundary line fabulous stuff. In the morning after I got my clothes back and I got them quick much quicker than in

aviation mess Rawalpindi. I had breakfast with Qaiser under the fly , consisting of toasts and omelete and two cuos of tae. We started recording the cahin of events for which I have actually come here.

In July 2011 No 1 Wing moved from Miranshah to Dir and Qaiser took the command and on the third day of his command one of his soldier died while atking bath in the river. The wing was atsk to initially block the four passes leading from Afghanistan into Dir and they carried two search opeartions as well, nothing much happened but one platoon of 16 AK regiment was ambushed in which four soldiers were killed. Wing moved to the Thall on 16th October 2011 and after carrying out a month of training was tasked to clear the Daapa Valley in conjunction with 16 FF and 42 Punjab, corps commander and IGFC held durbars and raised the morale of the troops. Now this 42 Punjab is my regiment ina sense that I served with them at Siachen and their commanding officer of that time is working in Islamabd and I usually meet him quite often.

This valley is wide with the dead end coming at the Dappa Pass which is flat cutting and from here the tarck leads to Tirah the stronghold of Afridis. The village where I am sitting now is known as Tappi Killi and wing headquarters is located at higher ground known as Three Pimples. From here if I look on the west then the ground opens up with green fields and after a kilometre or even less it joins the Kharmanna Nullah, across the nullah is another builtup and then a low level mound which runs towards the south. In the east is rather high plateau which leads towards the south, across the dappa pass the Cheelo Sar feature starts which is steep from this direction , it has two parts , the lower part is known as three mounds and then it rises up and moves towards the west is crescent shape and joins with the low level mound forming a saddle. No 1 Wing had to occupy the Cheelo Sar and that too at noight. Qaiser formed two groups of fifty scouts each. Dappa pass was cleared by the 16 FF and low level mound by the 42 Punjab . taliban were reportedat the peak of Cheelo Sar. It was a tough climb at pitch dark night but they managed to reach the thre mounds by first light without suffering any casualty they were fired upon but not heavily. Next day they they moved further up and cleared the rset of the faeuture. Later they came under attack from the Taliban but not a serious effort yet they managed to hold the post and this is the situation now, wing has 24 posts scattered in 64 square kilometres area. This is the story.

The rael stuff starts now as how thes posts are fed and are supplied with ration and water, this is where the donkeys and mules comes in who daily provides them with these items under a protection party but I am surprised that as to why thes logistics run are not stopped by the talibans. The normal administrative activities are also managed like leave and casualty evacuation and holfding of certain exams which are important for the promotion of scouts to next rank. Fresh ration is supplied after ten adys which in turn is moved up the posts. In Boya it was stopped by the atlibans for six months till peace pact was not signed there. I personally think that Taliban threat is exaggerated in this area as this area is not militant in nature.

Later we had discussions on wide arnging topics on which we differed. After lunch I had a cup of tae with the headclerk while sitting on a roof top. In his opinion the area is not that militarised, the people are not that hostile , he had been to Gilgit and he narrated me how he was impressed by the honesty of them. In his observation the women of this area are not treated fairly , they all worked in the fields look after the domestic animals and bred children. Majority of the men of this particular village are abroad and this e who are here does not acre much about their women to support his logic he gave the evidence that he has never seen the men while coming abck from Sadda carrying any fruit for their families even in holy month of Ramadan. He had travelled many times in civil transport with them and had seen them eating in bazaar but not caring to bring the same for the families, another point

whivch he arised was that there is no butchers shop between sadda and this village thus people have low nutrition diet. I am impressed with his observation.

Sitting at top I observed the village down below and saw women working in their houses , the houses are built very close to each other there seems to be no tactical consideration in this rather saving of space seems to be primary value. I also moved towards the two mules who were eating their fodder with a animal transport soldier listening to radion next to them. I inquired about the nature of mules as I have developed respect for this animal. Mule cannot reproduce, they are brought from remount depot Sargodha and are trained at Nowshehra and then they are allocated to Frontier Corps. These two mules have been brought from Miranshah day before yesterday, A Mule hasa service tenure of 15 years after which he is no more of any use, it very ahrd working , it ahs only only draw back that by nature he is stubborn and if he decides to stop in middle tah no power on earth can move him forward that is why they are always move under supervision towards posts. They are used for artion and carriage of ammunition upward to the posst/ There are three donkeys here as well, donkey are simple in nature, once they are shown their route once they simply obey the orders without any reservation or ego thuis they are send upwards independently and used only for carriage of water. One of the donkey is just a child now, I wonder is he the same whom I saw at Miramshah on Mothers Day, he seems to be quite attached to his mother.

There is an old man here really old he lives in the mud hut next to me and I saw him in the morning, it is asid that he is over hundred years and took part in the WW1, I am looking forward to meet him tomorrow lets see . In the evening I saw a woman shouting to someone at quite a high pitch, something very unusual in pathan culture. Qaiser and myself had dinner together , rice and lentil with cutlets, good and simple food. I observed that one of the scout ahd his wife admitted in hospital for delivery he got leave, another was garnted leave for the sickness of his mother and another three wre granted the routine leave. All this were brought up by the BHM who also got signatures and approval on other issues.

29th September 2012

1725 hours, sitting in the bunker, since the roofs are made up of trees and planks thus it constantly creaks with occasional fall of dust, my head has plenty of it now, on the upper floor I think the barber and other staff is residing, on entrance there is a room for the mules and donkeys. The space here is vertical thus the available accommodation is being utilised fully. Weather is nether hot nor cold contatry to common perception the September and October are quite warm not only here but also in northern araes of Paistan. Today being Saturday is a non working day although the distinction between working nad non working is very thin line in operational area. Yesterday bein Friday was a quite day, I sat with Lt Col Qaiser in hi sfly almost whole day, we had breakfast and in between there was a constant flow of telephone calls , some one asking or reporting about movement of troops, moiscreants, shortage of ration or surplus of ammunition ona particular post, leave of scouts, rotation around the posts. Qaiser has a complete grip on the situation and is energetic and takes lot of interet. He called all the appointment holdeers dealing with uniform, the wing has received almost 400 track suits from Miranshah, they have been made by Colonel Wajahat with Lt Col rabnawaz looking after the project, it is amulti million rupees project, half of the amount is being paid by the headquatrtrs and scouts are paying only ahlf {rs 600} it includes track suit, shirt and a cap but no shorts. We aslo saw the Pakistan and South Africa match, at the end of south Africa 's batting the electricity went off and I came to my bunker. Shortly I received telephone call from the signal opeartors requesting me to request the Qaiser to start the generator but I politely declined, any way soon Qaiser on thevrequest of subedar major Ashna Gul gave orders for the geneartors to operate. The mess havildar and few clerks came to my bunker to atch the agme and I welcome them. Pakistan were 76 for 7 wickets when

almost all left less three and miraculously Pakistan won thanks to hard hitting of Umar Gul. This cricket is the major unifying factor in Pakistan, in this remote area with war going on the win lifted the morale, it crossed the boundaries, we all were one and passed comments and criticised the players but in the end the victory elevated us. During the match there are lot of advertisement and it is sitting with troops and conservative patrons that one realise how a advertisement can either have positive or negative impact. Any nudity or even touching of bodies among men and women, cosmetics, relationships all plays decisive role. Later at night India was thrashed by the Australia which added icing to the cake.

Today in the morning but first let me enjoy the dream which I saw , I was with my family, I saw my son and daughter playing in ice, I saw my wife cooking food but when I opened my eyes none was there. I thought of how last year I was in America with Reena at Virginia, the cold and chill in the air, the small window through which I would look at the Port Republic Road.

I sat under the fly with such mix feelings, later Qaiser came, oh I forgot to mention that it is quite an exercise to attend the call of nature here and then shaving but both have to be attended. The toilet seat is eastern in nature with partial close door, open air from top and risk of shells coming any time. Shave I am doing dry just using the razor and nothing and that too without any help of mirror. There are few sweepers here thus no filth is seen, in the initial days of North Waziristan Militia the founding fathers made sure that every post should have a sweeper and cook . Later Qaiser took me on a long drive towards Jogi which is on other axis. We have to drive back almost twenty minutes and then cross the Sultani bridge and then drive on a dirt , stony ascending track with narrow width through on odd village amidst men working and women carrying water in blue plastic carriers up. One escort Land cruiser with almost half a dozen armed scouts led in front, there is jammer in our vehicle which jams all frequency thus remote control IEDs can be avoided but not the pressure operated. I had opted to sit in the rear seat in order to save Qaiser the tension of driving but then he also sat with me in the rear and despite my best he refused to sit in front thus I had to sit in front and he drove.

The Taliban had two strong hold here one was in Cheelo Sar/Dappa area and other on the axis on which we are driving now. The Taliban do not resist in a conventional manner rather they simply live with the natives speaking and sharing same cultural and linguistic values and attack the security forces in a guerrilla style with small arms and exploding bombs , no suicide bombing has taken place here. In my opinion these are not as ferocious as in Tochi Valley. The army moved on Jogi Axis and cleared the area which means establishing the posts and attacking those villages from where the fire was initiated. In the end army was able to clear the area and handed over the posts to No 1 Wing of Tochi Scouts and also other wing of Kurram Militia is also operating in the area. These posts are often attacked by the talibans by using fire and closing up trying to find any weakness in the defence but so far they have no success and despite being under constant attack these scouts have held the nerves. In terms of firepower the Talibans are no match to regular or scouts but it is their psychological impact which is dangerous and I think in this valley the scouts have the better of morale and nerves. Qaiser halted at the fire base which he had established at jogi rather short of it. He has his 81 mm Morar, 14.5mm twin barrel gun and 37 mm single barrel gun on a high ground from where he can provide fire support to his posts at Cheelo Sar and at Sammo Killi. He had almost spent a week during peak operations on this post sleeping under a open tent. I was interested in taking pictures of these weapons to put it into the Tochi History book and Qaiser is more than helpful in this regard. First a dummy drill of mortar group and then few snaps of 14.5 and 37 mm. Qaiser offered me to fire both weapons which I initially resisted because it has been long that I fired these two weapons and had that internal fear that something will go wrong during firing but then I agreed. I fired a burst of seven shells from 37

mm, The fire is through a foot pedal and one has to press it really hard to fire the shot. The noise of fire is not deafening but certainly loud and bit of smoke comes out from the barrel. I am impressed with their drills and above all the way they handle the very concept of fire, it was a routine for them. Later I fired quite a number of rounds from 14.5 the same procedure, the fire is by pushing aside a plate with your feet and then pressing the pedal, the fire is devastating in nature, burst of rounds and the sound is again not deafening but loud.

I was a different person after firing and now have more respect for Qaiser not for the reason that he has allowed me to fire but the way he is taking this firing in real sense, a scout or soldier only gets confidence when he actually fires the weapon and not through long talks. When you give them this liberty when you trust them they respond. In my three years of military service with ack ack I never fire so much of these weapons as I have fired here in one day. This liberty of action was not there in afghan war and neither at Siachen. Thus the morale and output also vary with the number of rounds you fire. I am convinced that in regular army an officer must fire more of these heavy weapons. We get very high grades in weapon course but seldom an officer fires these weapons, even 12.7 is rare. There are always long safety drills, I can bet that very few officers of this army can actually assemble a 14.7 gun. This war has done good in uplifting these standards but still a long way to go. Another weapon of repute is RPG – 7, I have not fired it but what I have gathered about it in last three months speaks volume about it. It first came to lime light in 1973 Arab – Israel War when it was used by the Egyptians to hunt the Israeli tanks. In our scenario it is the most common weapon held by the Talibans, a fantastic piece of weaponry. I had discussion with Qaiser and many others regarding the weapons, these weapons especially the 37 and 14.5 were declared obsolete by the army and new modern and high tech systems were incorporated but these weapons have proved their worth now. Their beauty and effectiveness lies in the easy and rough handling that they can take, for instance 14.5 was disassembled by the scouts and taken up to the higher posts on a simple Toyota land cruiser and same hold true for 37mm gun. One has to understand that arms manufacturers create a myth through demonstration and papers in which countries are made to realise that their existing weapon system is obsolete and thus they are lured in to buy modern more expensive weapon system. Take the example of Oerlikon Gun System which simply cannot operate in such environments it requires a western battle conditions. Similarly the tank or armoured cars is another example, we have injected heavy and big tanks and writing off small scout cars in entirety, the result is that the big tanks have become a liability here, one tank was overturned in Sammo Killi, it was a miracle that the crew survived and while tank had to be extricated a big operation. The net result of all this is that there is a dire need to have a separate corps for frontier warfare which already exists in the shape of Frontier Corps, only it has to be supplemented with suitable weapons. What stops this FC to have its own armoured corps comprising of small tanks, have its own aviation corps, medical and signal. But the hard fact is that army will not let it have all of this. The regular army is too cumbersome too staff heavy to have any worth mentioning results. The success it has gained has come at a very heavy financial cost and in the face of real resistance as in North Waziristan it has failed to have any worth highlighting output.

I am supposed to leave this area tomorrow and head for Thall and then Bannu and from there to move towards Dera Ismail Kahn and then to No 2 Wing at Gomal Zam but the wing commander there is on leave thus I will be staying at Bannu Serai. The cricket match between Sri Lanka and West Indies turned out to be one sided affair, England defeated New Zealand.

There is a repatriation going on in the area, almost 65 vehicles moved back into the area which has been cleared by the army and scouts. Qaiser was bit anxious regarding the late movement of these people because it creates administrative and security environments. Most of the vacant houses are under the occupation of scouts or military and during hours of darkness this relief in lines is quite

sensitive issue. Since this is Saturday thus the number of vehicular movement among the civilians is quite high and they all have one excuse that they are taking their families for delivery cases. This is one aspect which works. In another case one person approached the Sammo killi check point requesting that tomorrow is his marriage and he wants to take his bride in a car beyond the check point , it was not granted. Tonight is full moon, it is a beauty, one can see the whole valley the silhouettes of mountains and tracks is visible. I saw and stared at the full moon while standing at the edge of a mound , by mere shifting of my position I can stare it through the high trees which are called ghghuna here. A sentry was also standing and we chatted on many issues, the beauty of the moon, its effects on the humans, how terrorist can also make use of it, his experience in Dir area and the strength of the tree. He told me that this Ghghuna is used for making Hull and in construction of houses. Somehow the other contrary to regular army troops one feels shy in talking about female to these scouts, it is something in the culture.

30th September 2012 Sunday

1230 hours. The constant movement up on the floor is causing regular dispersion of mud on my head. A sunny day, we had a photographic session today , almost all the scouts present wore uniform and we had a good photo session, my thanks to Qaiser. Unfortunately all the pictures were wiped out from the camera but luckily I was using two cameras thus I avoided Murphy Law in totality. Qaiser gave me an opportunity to speak to the troops regarding the project which I did and had a clap from them. A Binjo car was seen approaching from Takht Sar are and Qaiser immediately gave the orders to have bursts of fire on both sides of car but explicitly ordering not to hit the car. It is these immediate, prompt and stern orders which not only ensure the safety of own troops but arise their morale and deter any adventurous undertaking from the terrorist , I am impressed by this display. The movement upward on the floor is a constant torture and there is nothing else to do other than to wait for the cricket match between Pakistan and India which starts at 1500 hours.

1st October 2012, Monday, 2100 hours, Bannu

Lying in the Tochi Scouts Serai, reading the journal I wrote while travelling and staying in America and with that comes the Reena in mind, she has been very caring and loving since I have re-met again three years ago after a lapse of twenty years. It looks a fairy tale and it is indeed a fairy tale. I have the mobile lying next to me but I have switched it off , I have no call either with my father or mother or for that matter with any body, what is the problem with me, I run away from all the people who loves me, my heart is dead; it hurts , I have no idea what am I doing with my life other than spending and living on day to day basis. Just had a walk in the cantonment but it a dead cantonment, I wanted to see the cricket match but the waiter in station mess told me that TV had been taken to the Kohat for replacement, I don't believe him but then I simply walked away back to the Serai. Old haunted houses of british era, old trees and very few men walking. There is one house which is dubbed as Pride of HAT, 41 AK. I am not sure whether is regimental office or a residence. I walked and walked through the dusty road. I wondered that one time it was lively and full of life, incidentally I recently finished Mallam Leigh's account of Bannu he was a Deputy Commissioner here in 1930's. My mind was also occupied on the snakes because I think they are in plenty here and it was during this mental appreciation that I almost stepped on a frog , he jumped and jumped on my feet, I was wearing chappalls, luckily I did not shrieked.

Last night Pakistan lost the match in a pathetic manner, myself and Qaiser underwent lot of tension and stress, the food which included fish as well tasted badly in such circumstances, later we had a bit of talk on world history and then I walked back to my hut and slept restlessly. Qaiser told me that the bride which had requested for the car had walked on foot accompanied by fifteen men to her new house. He further highlighted that he had seen one of the houses from inside and these people

have inbuilt bath system where the bedroom has a shower place with in it; quite a news , we both for some time contemplated on how it works. The telephone constantly was busy, he has a good telephone or communication system with all of his 24 posts, which are connected with Icom system working on VHF, he also has a HF set apart from a Sanao Chinese system which is linked with regular civil telephone system. There is no concept of post man, on my query as to what is the pattern of delivering mail to the posts , he replied that none writes the letters any more they use this communication system. For the delivery and receipt of official mail which either comes down from the brigade headquarters at Thall or from Tochi Scouts at Miranshah, he has deputed a despatch rider who collects it daily from Thall along with an Urdu newspaper 'Mashriq'. Leave is the key issue with scouts alongwith pay. The pay is collected from National Bank Sadda and then distributed to the company pay NCO's who in turn physically hand over to all the scouts at posts and get their signatures as well. The ration is another sour point especially during operation when the food was collectively prepared and then further distributed to posts employing mules. The scouts are not used to eating Meal Ready to Eat {MRE} thus these were used only once and emphasis is on providing fresh ration to every post, now all posts cook their own food. Qaiser is now working on how to cope with the forthcoming Eid leave which is less than month away. Every one wants to spend the leave with their family but this is not possible thus he is working on the issue. Eid leave certainly poses a big dilemma and I am happy that I am not in Qaiser's foot.

In the morning after breakfast which for a change comprised of cutlets as well, two cups of tea, Qaiser presented me with a souvenir a shield and we both parted, I have high regards for Qaiser's professional abilities he is energetic and fair with a forward looking vision, a very religious person yet having a sense of humour .

The two car{Hilux} convoy drove out from Tabbi Killi at 1000 hours or slightly late, weather was fine, slightly hot, I was wearing a white T shirt and khaki trouser, all other were in full combat dress which includes over 100 rounds of ammunition, Small Machine Gun, light machine gun mounted on a tripod and fixed at the rear of our vehicle, wireless sets, all in all we were over a dozen. We soon crossed the Sultani Bridge and in this half an hour of drive we came across few civilian vehicles also in which invariably there was a female clad in full veil sitting in rear was present, few men working on construction along the road or track. After crossing the bridge we soon came across a horde of children which were going back home, I instantly looked at my watch it was half past eleven, other day while driving with Qaiser it was the same time when the children had the break, probably the school timings are only up till 1130. Boys of all age ranging from innocent looking toodlers to teenagers all wearing black militia kameez shalwar and black peak cap with a red badge, I am not sure whether this is provided by the state or they have to buy it at their own. The school bags also vary majority were carrying their books in shopping bag or in hands but few had the proper bag as well. The strength must be over two hundred, I instructed the driver to be extra careful because now and then the boys would cross the road . In my opinion these boys have to cover over 2-3 miles daily on foot one way for schooling. They all stared at our convoy, the very young ones invariably salutes and other merely stares with smile or wave hands. For next half an hour till we reached Sadda the flow of school children remained constant. This is the generation on which we needs investment, the state has provided the schools and is in the process of constructing even more but still there are few administrative issues that needs to be resolve like the transportation and provision of free meals to the boys apart from books. These boys in majority of the cases had very little to eat in the breakfast and have no money to buy anything from the shop which in any case are very rare. Their parents needsaplause for sending them to school for their better future. In my opinion the retired personnals of education directorate from Frontier Corps are very ideal to be employed as school teachers and

certainly the FC can play an important role in this long strategic uplifting of the area. I did not observed any NGO working in the area on this issue. The area is very similar to Gilgit and Skardu but where as in these areas the Agha Khan Foundation is working quite diligently on many projects no such venture or personality is visible here. There were quite a number of small girls also coming back from school near Sadda, their uniform consist of blue kameez and white shalwar with white scarf, they move in groups among themselves and no boy was allowed to walk with them. There is a boys hostel at Sadda but what little I could peep through the open gate it looked pathetic in condition. All along the Levies and Khassadars have their posts and one striking feature about their small posts are the flowers that they have planted which gives very tidy and artistic looks.

Sadda as usual was bustling with life, same aroma of kebabs. From Sadda till Thall which we reached at 1300 hours, my eyes and mind were looking at the students, the colour of uniform changed into khaki and I noticed few young students wearing even trousers and shirt too probably coming from private school which are also here, housed in simple building with signs of teaching English. There are few English teaching centres also although the very spelling of what they intend teaching are incorrect. Transportation of children is the greyest area in almost every part of my country. Time and again I wish for the old government transport service which was in use in last decade and half to be operative again, it can serves the purpose by providing free transport service to students only, no political party has even thought about it, they all are more concerned about greater philosophical issues. At Sadda the scouts arranged a private taxi for me to take me to Bannu, there are two more scouts going with me on leave one uptill Kohat and other right till Bannu. After saying good bye and shaking hands with all I bid them and our journey started in a Toyota taxi driven by a mid sixties driver.

For almost quarter of century in my mind and memory the beauty of that journey in 1986 which I undertook towards Parachinar was symbolised by the old trees on both sides of the road with shade covering almost every corner of the road, I searched for that picture and soon realised that all those trees have been cut down to expand the road and instead popular has been planted which gives partial shade. I remained quite as other three were talking in Pashto which I can understand partially, there was Pashto music as well which are normally a copy of Indian songs and highly irritating in nature. The driver as usual was fast and casual thus I was under stress to keep an eye on events. We made a halt at a CNG pump and one of the scouts went to fetch a Dew Mountain Cold Drink, I had enough of this yellowish stingy drink and as such politely declined the offer. Now I had conversation with driver and asked him about those trees and he nodded in agreement that there were trees and that have been cut down. However there are still few patches of that beauty still surviving which I noted. About the train and track I felt sad as it was a good mode of transport. Road presently is under repair and construction{ it was same in 1986 too}, driver asked me about the present situation which I simply stated is good and it is just a passage of time. Driver now narrated his tenure in Iraq couple of years back, how he went there in search of work, how he was badly treated by the Salman an Arab who was more concerned about his vehicles than their safety {drivers} and so on, this driver had good words about the Americans because in the end it was they who actually rescued him from the clutches of that Salman. At this point he tried to overtake a van which was already overtaking another van and resultantly we barely survived a crash, it was a close shave, now the two scouts in the taxi were adamant to have a fight with the van driver but I simply told them to forget the incident and move on. I was now even more cautious about the safety of myself in such a rash driving environments. We reached Bannu at 1600 hours and all along the driver kept on cribbing about the way other drivers were violating the rules and constantly breaking them himself, at times overtaking

on a climb, in a curve, on a bridge. It was a hot day; we refuelled twice enroute and safely reached the Serai at 1600 hours where I had a sigh of relief.

2nd October 2012

Woke up early in the morning the digging is going outside for the boring of water well, read my journal of America and thought of Reena she had done maximum for me there and she is right in labelling me as 'beqadra'. There are chances of a helicopter movement thus I better get ready, my small bag has got a broken arm, my head is still suffering from heat. I had a long conversation with Lt Col Jawwad, he is the only friend that I have and it is quite refreshing to have conversation with him, he is trying to adjust in his new task as commanding officer and as such his under command are having tough times.

1630 hours, Miranshah. Wonders of modern world that I am sitting in my room No 4 in Tochi Mess having a cup of tea. Commandant Colonel Wajahat gave me a call and we had a chat, he had brought the pigeons from Lahore and intend experimenting with sending the messages as in old days, he had four such pigeons and he informed me that experiment has failed miserably, he had taken all the four to a nearby post and set them free hoping that they will fly back to his residence but three of them after a short flight sat on a nearby house and fourth one is untraceable. Wajahat also offered me that in case if I want he can arrange transport to bring me back to Miranshah, I declined the offer as it is highly risky and only last Wednesday an IED had been blasted on a vehicle killing four army soldiers, in retaliation drone attack was conducted on Friday in which two miscreants were killed. There was news that a helicopter might fly to Miranshah from Peshawar and I was informed by the attendant of this. He later confirmed it at 1355 hours and aptly I was ready and reached the helipad which is next to the old Bannu Fort. A Puma came but there were quite a number of soldiers in waiting thus I remained idle having no hope of getting a seat but one of soldiers signalled me to come forward and then it was the pilot's discretion to allow. Major Babar was the captain rather co-pilot and he instantly recognised me although I failed to do so and I was in the Puma, he was very courteous indeed.

Flight was uneventful but I scanned the area trying to make out of geography. The Tochi River joins and flows rather south west of Bannu with Kurram flowing on the north. The Tochi is forced to adopt this path because of low mountain ridges that forms its southern boundary. The area is green and after few minutes of flying the air field of Bannu becomes visible and then the town of Mirali. We were flying over the eastern end of the Tochi valley, it is rather plain but what a contrast to the Kurram valley which is fertile and green, here only the adjoining areas of the Tochi are fertile rest is barren, valley itself is narrow, the river is also not very wide and twisting becoming narrower and narrower as one looks at the western end {Afghanistan}. Soon we were over the Miranshah and landed safely, my last concern was the rather fast approach of the Puma for landing but then it was put under control, the heli landed very close to the mud hangar which is not a very good sign, many accidents have taken place mainly due to this last second casual attitude but then pilot in command is the best judge.

Australia and Pakistan match is going on, Pakistan has scored 149 and victory seems a distant reality. My regret is that I have not been able to call my parents or Reena but I did have conversation with Jawad and Tiger. Sitting here is like sitting in home but now I must complete the book.

9th October 2012

I am sitting in the Officers Mess Library at Miranshah surrounded by a galaxy of writers, ideas, philosophies, travelogue and above all history. I will not be off the mark if I say that I am

having a company of killers because in these over four hundred books at least there are description of over thirty million human killings, how to do it, why to do it, how it was executed, why it was executed, how to do it in future, why not to leave a single individual alive. There are accounts of heroics, I like 'Sky My Kingdom' by the German female pilot the one who flew the Hitler; Hanna Reitsch translated by Lawrence Wilson, a 1955 edition. She talks of her childhood how her father used to love music. Another book which I scanned last night was about Dr Goebbels, he suffered from a disease in the childhood, was physically weak, a propagandist of highest order 'one who rules the streets rule the country'. Then there are speeches of Winston Churchill in two volumes. In recent times I have developed a dislike for him yet his command of English language is extraordinary. I just glanced through them and surprisingly I found that these are not mere speeches rather a history of war itself. Forward from Victory are the speeches of Field Marshal Montgomery the most over rated general of all time, I have read his one book which he wrote after his retirement and is about travelling in China and other parts of world his observations were valid, however at present his speech on morale is fantastic because I have gone through it when I came here in May, how fear paralyse you, how shabby appearance is detrimental to good morale.

Pakistan lost the semi-final to Sri Lanka, India was out early thus the pain was gone, I made a call to Lieutenant Colonel Qaiser as per promise. In the final Sri Lanka lost to West Indies but the day Pakistan lost the match it was very tense and as soon the results became obvious I started working on the book and till to date have finished till 2005. Nothing extraordinary about the chain of events in that period. There was friendship with Americans, combined raids were conducted in the valley to apprehend the Talibans but without any success. The valley agitated not because of this but due to load shedding and electric bills in 2002-2003. There was a tribal war between the Madda Khel and Khaddar Khel Wazirs which paved the way for the scouts to occupy the inaccessible areas at Dwa Toi, Kazha Valley and Bangidar area at the beginning of 2002. In 2002 and 2003 there was an increase in activity across the border and very close to it by the Americans but somehow the other they were confined to the territory of Afghanistan, there were instances of border violation but these should not be taken seriously because in certain cases they flew for seconds inside the own area and in other cases they flew less than a kilometre in terms of distance. It was only at Alwara Mandi that a serious violation took place in which they landed inside the own territory for minutes and searched a house, in majority of the cases the fire work also remained confined to Afghanistan at times however one odd mortar shell did land in our area. Now if one compares the situation between the Turkey and Syria where a single mortar shell landing inside Turkey has provoked the parliament to an extent that war has been authorised on Syria then one has to give credit to Pakistan, America and Afghanistan for maintain a peace among themselves. Pakistani troops did not like the Northern Alliance troops who are not Pashtuns and majority of trouble erupted from this lack of confidence. In my opinion Pakistan managed to walk a tight rope in a very balance way and Americans also played a key role in it. Both these countries conducted joint search operations as well in which American troops wore the Scouts uniform also, they were housed in a barrack not more than hundred meters away from Jalal Ud Din Haqqani's home where his family was living, strange world. When I look back from here I can recall the days when these both countries were very close buddies, own Army Aviation pilots went to America for training, Americans were teaching them at Dhamial where a special school was also opened up for this. Every day there were American military flights taking off from Chaklala, I have pictures of post 2005 earthquake when Americans came to our rescue at the end a grand dinner was given in their honour at Qasim Base, smiling pictures of officers and troops. In 2008 there was a ceremony held at Qasim Base in which American ambassador was also present and I struck a conversation with the public relations officer of American Embassy because I was keen to have photographs of the ceremony for the Aviation History book and we both agreed to meet each other at

Serena next evening. She was quite bulky but pretty, I gave her the book Great Game as gift and she handed me over the pictures; those were the times. Officers were against them then also but they were the one whom we call fundamentalist, who were taking the side of Talibans rather than the state in the conflict and exactly this is what is being highlighted in the books I have referred above. If the state has waged a war than one must fight till the end irrespective of its morality.

I have met another very fine officer from Army Aviation Major Jawad of 25 Aviation Squadron, he likes fountain pens, leather shoes, books, collects junks and have a positive attitude towards life thus we both are friends, above all he is a good listener and nothing pleases a retired officer more than this. Colonel Ghumman also from aviation is here but he talks more, I like him because it was in 1992 that he walked into my room at Gujranwala with Captain Jeidi my platoon mate and since then has been very courteous and now is a professional senior officer. He has been flying throughout the last ten years in the tribal area with occasional breaks, he has plenty of stories, he is the only one who is trigger happy in Cobra which is a good sign, no pain of conscious on killing the innocent, no regret on firing rockets on assembly of people, this is what war is all about. Above all he has juicy and spicy tales of his adventures in the Peace Keeping force at Sudan and Italy.

Had a splendid brunch at Colonel Wajahat the Commandant at his residence on this Sunday, a royal menu, dishes for which I was yearning, nihari, brain masala, batair, paneer palak/saag, but the dish which was sensational was 'date halwa'. I am now part of Tochi Scouts, I go much before the guest arrival time and leaves when all other have left, it is now a friendship with Wajahat, I like him, he has a sense of humour, uses foul language the way an army officer should use and spends the money the way a commandant should do, above all he does not pend anything for later. I wish him success in career but I doubt it because he is very open mouth about the policies; let's see what happens. Another officer who has caught my eyes is Captain Bilal a very good officer indeed.

11th October 2012

It is 2100 hours and awaiting for the dinner, I am taking dinner in the mess, there is no lunch and at times there is no breakfast rather a cup of tea, not that there is any shortage of food here but the timings are such that there seems to be no time for such frivolity. Today I had a track suit from Tochi scouts and it seems that only thing missing is the uniform now otherwise I am a tochte. Routine is haphazard, late awakenings despite my best effort to be early, every night I go to bed with solemn thought and pledge to be up early but every day there is a regret. Then time in the clerks office, meeting and reading old files then a cup of tea with young officers at adjutant Lieutenant Amin of 38 Cavalry's office then some work in the library, off to tennis where I am still practising with marker, neither I have been invited to play at the clay court and nor I have any desire but I spend most of time sitting outside having cup of tea and little weight lifting. Tennis is addiction to watch here, standard of game not very high but the remarks and the spirit in which it is played is the catch. Commandant Colonel Wajahat and Major Zameer are always on one side with colonel Riaz the colonel staff and either Lieutenant Colonel Omar or Amir on other end, Brigadier Shahid is on leave and expected to be back after two days. The discussion after tennis is interesting and a window into the minds of present day senior level commanders and staff officers. The issue now a days is the Malala Yousafzai, two days ago while having a cup of tea at the tennis the grade one intelligence officer inquired me that do I know Malala, I said no and then he narrated the firing on her, later I watched television and came to know about her. Three days back the discussion was about Imran Khan's peace march to Waziristan and these two are interlinked to each other in a cob web manner and before these two incidents it was cricket world cup but it is history now.

Imran Khan's peace march is clouded in mystery as none of the participants and all those who have been following his politics have ever been in North Waziristan or have any analytical approach towards the whole issue, his one of the party president Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi an Oxford graduate has been the foreign minister of Pakistan thus he must be well conversant with the international politics. There are two types of politics, one which revolves around real world and other around ideals and both cannot intercept each other. The army officers I sense have a soft corner for Imran for reasons that they all are fed up of other two parties for no reason at all; thus they were quite enthusiastic about his march. Indirectly it amounts to taking a side of Taliban and this is very strange because they are fighting against these very Taliban and yet supporting the very person who is having a soft corner for Taliban. Now after Malala incident the dynamics have changed because this incident has sparked a worldwide condemnation and Imran Khan is not among those who have outrightly condemned it he has disguised his words but the general mood is now to go after the Taliban and an operation in North Waziristan may be on card because now the public sympathy is with the state. This was the discussion that took place and Drones are all time favourites for condemnation, but why? Colonel Ghuman had the logic of international law and morality although only yesterday he confessed of firing over the civilian people because to him it is difficult to differentiate between friend and foe, Colonel Riaz is in favour of them but he cannot express it explicitly. The other officers simply listen and pass one odd comment. In last three days there has been two drone attacks, my own observation is that these drone attacks take place within forty eight hours of any strike done by Taliban and are a source of morale boosting for every person.

Last night there was an extravagant dine out of 103 Brigade Commander along with 20 and 36 Baloch Regiments. I was invited and before that I had a good conversation with Major General Ali Abbas nothing official just talking about the time when we used to buy the garlands of flowers for our wives from the road side vendors. Dinner had everything and in abundance which in my own opinion is wastage of food. Fish, mutton, chicken, kebabs, rice, qeema, vegetable and on top of it two kinds of sweet dishes along with a variety of salads and chutneys. I was made to sit on head table where as the commandant Tochi had to sit on a round table which I think is not on, and I have a strong feeling that he made this sitting reshuffle, he is too courteous in this aspect. I did not utter a word other than passing remarks about the good quality of food. Brigadier Raza was sitting next to me and he in military language locked horns with general over strategy, had I been in service I would have kicked him under the table but not now. The topics generally range on every subject including politics but not women. Over all it was ok, later Ali spoke well to raise the morale of the young officers, he can speak very well although he still tries to be humble in this aspect.

On historical aspect I have come across one more fantastic person Clerk Sabz Ali, he caught me yesterday in the clerk's office. The worst scenario is when you are confronted by a person who is educated but under paid, his complains are socialistic in nature, his views idealistic and his vision is impracticable in which all the wealth of the world is equally distributed among all people. The standard perception of own country going down the drain the corruption and safarish and on top of it the complaints against the character of president Zardari were there. I tackled it one by one giving him the example from the life going around him and me, I highlighted that the average pay of a scout sepoy now a days is more than what a lecturer is getting in the civil despite the fact that the scout sepoy is only under graduate and can hardly at times write his own name. I also highlighted the fact that even here in Tochi the people tend to look after their own tribes more than others, can we call it corruption or riwaj, then the fact that in our culture we are bound to accommodate our relatives or clan despite our difficulties but then this is what culture is all about. I am happy that he genuinely got convinced and we became good friends, his quality is that he has been maintaining a diary in which

every terrorist incident that has taken place in last ten years is recorded, he has data in his mobile whenever any drone has struck since 2007. I have found him a genuine lover of history, he has promised to get the diary from his home by this week which will ease my work.

Today I interviewed Subedar Sharbat regarding his account of Aarsal Khan the gangster. Aarsal Khan ‘ Gabbar Singh of Tajaauri’

Aarsal Khan was a notorious gangster who might have lived the life of his choosing which was mainly kidnapping had he not committed the cardinal sin of kidnapping two girls Fouzia and Sobia daughters of Sharifullah on 12th march 2004 they were going to attend a marriage with their father. Kidnapping of females in the North Waziristan is not regarded as a manly act and that brought the wrath of state against him. Readers might have remembered that almost a decade ago the Nowsher Fort was built in the area of Karkanwam to check the notorious and nefarious acts of anti - society elements and this time again the Tochi Scouts were in hunt for Aarsal Khan. His abode was across and over the mountain that stood in front of Nowsher Fort. Commandant Tochi Scouts Colonel Ashiq Hussain himself led the expedition along with a wing of Swat scouts and one company of Khyber Rifles. Village Karkanwam comprising over 200 houses is a notorious area located at the junction of four agencies i.e FR Bannu on the East, FR Lakki on South East, South Waziristan Agency on South West and North Waziristan Agency on North West. Due to its geographical layout, it has always been a safe heaven for proclaimed offenders who harbour the dacoits, car lifters, kidnappers and other notorious people from down districts. No agency has ever been able to exercise control on this area. This operation against Aarsal Khan was planned and conducted from 31 March 2003.

Aarsal Khan belonged to the Shah Jani Khel tribe a sub section of Bhattani, his life is a strange paradox of good and evil, he was the uncrowned king of his area . Political agents had to pay him for every development in the area for instance he was paid 1.5 Million Rupees for the construction of road from Tajaauri – Gabar Shadi Khel, he was also paid 1.2 million for the construction of civil dispensary at Gazbaba and another .6 million for the construction of women teachers hostel at Chigalair. Hi son Wasi Khan was employed at a monthly pay of Rupees 3100/ as chowkidar at the dispensary; but all this changed after the kidnapping of the girls.

After preliminary reconnaissance the very first arrest was made on 14th April 2004 at Tajbi Khel then on 16th April the arrests were made at Azad Khel, Ayub Khel, Aram Tala and Paa Khel. This search and arrests continued till 11th May 2004 when last arrest was made in Shadi Khel. A total of 144 persons were arrested and 40 houses were demolished. One scout of Swat Scouts was killed and three other were wounded in this operation. Two 12.7mm guns, one light machine gun, three sub machine guns, thirteen rockets of RPG-7, 77 bombs of three inch mortar were recovered from Aarsal Khan’s arsenal not to mention over five thousand rounds of varying calibres.

Subedar Sharbat Khattak was then a naik he narrates ‘ *I was part of the commandant’s escort then and we carried the reconnaissance, it required almost three hours of hard journey from Nowshehr Fort to Chigalair where it was reported that Aarsal Kahn is hiding. Major Bajwa, Lieutenant Colonel Zafar ullah Khan, Major Hanif our military transport officer were also with us, Subedar Yar Muhammad of Tochi Field Battery who later embraced sahadat in in a road blast was commanding the guns. We reached the Chigalair by afternoon, it was reported that Aarsal Khan is residing in the government dispensary. The dispensary was empty but when we were about to return we were fired from the nearby houses and from adjoining high grounds, we brought artillery fire and before darkness we retreated to our camp. Next day we went again and arrested few people and then on tips of local we raided few other places like Azad Khel, Ayub Khel, Aram Khel and Paa Khel on 16th April, we were able to arrest the family of Aarsal Khan including his daughters Chamroza, Eman*

Bibi and wife Khair Bibi apart from his sons Wasil Khan and Kameshair. I remember that Aarsal Khan's mother was also part of this arrest apart from his two bhabis in which one was old and other relatively young which tried to outrun the scouts but was captured. Aarsal's mother pleaded that this is disgrace to the family's pride on which our answer was that the girls whom Aarsal had abducted also are some body's honour, meanwhile we got the news that one of the girl Fouzia has been killed and her burnt body has been left in open. On 19th April we got hold of Angoor Khan at Tajbi Khel, it was reported that this Angoor Khan is supplying food and water to the Aarsal Khan but Angoor flatly refuted this and took swear on the holy Koran and also said that if he lies then his Hajj may go waste, on this he was left. Later that night one of the abductee managed to escape from Aarsal Khan and he narrated that not only he but the other girl is also alive and they all were kept in a cave, "I saw your feet while you were searching and could hear your words also but Aarsal Khan was pointing a gun to our head and threatened that if any one made any noise he will blast his brains off". This person also confirmed that on same very day Angoor Khan had come and delivered the food. On this we again arrested Angoor Khan, his wife and six years old son, they all were kept in separate rooms, we started interrogation but none of them was willing to open his mouth, thus we played a tactics and threatened the wife that if she wants to see his son and husband alive then she must speak out and also fired a shot in air, the women became hysterical and pleaded that the life of her son be spared and Angoor Khan may be killed, she admitted that Angoor Khan is party to all the crimes of Aarsal Khan. In another raid we captured two brothers' one named Sikander and other We used same tactics on them, Sikander was very tough, he was given the beating of his life for the reason that one scout Lance Naik Zahid of Swat Scouts had succumbed to a rifle shot and other Nowshahr was taken prisoner along with the weapons by Aarsal Khan, Sikander remained defiant however his younger brother admitted that he has been acting as the driver of the Aarsal Khan and on his tips further arrests were made'.

Aarsal Khan despite all the efforts of scouts remained fugitive, a combined Jirga of Marwat and Bhattani tribes was assembled on 7th May 2004 which imposed a fine of 1.5 Million Rupees on any one found guilty of providing harbour to Aarsal Khan or his friends. Aarsal Khan finally met his fate in 2010 when he was poisoned by his friend who had invited him on a dinner. The other brother of Sikander was later enrolled in Tochi Scouts and is now a proficient and disciplined driver.

11th October 2012

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19th October 2012

It is noon, outside it is drizzling, the day had started with a fire, initially I heard two rounds of fire which I thought that some officer had purchased a weapon and is testing it then there was a long burst, few rounds fired on single shot and then another long burst of machine gun, it continued for some time. Now with passage of time the patience has increased and one does not tend to react as panicky as in early days. I all of a sudden then got up, I thought that the Talibans have attacked the prison which is next to the mess building and about which Colonel Wajahat has been mentioning for last few days. Outside the sweeper was sweeping I inquired him and he just gave a blank look, the waiter was walking towards me with a tray and tea, then I saw captains Saad, Bilal and Waqas in full military gear walking towards the vehicle, firing was still going on. I had a meeting with Brigadier Aqeel commander of 103 Brigade, the one who took part in the 6th May 2012 incident, he and his brigade is leaving for Lahore on this Sunday and I wanted to have his opinion about that incident. In my opinion one cannot do justice to the history without getting view point of all concern. I had to take the bath but now I was concerned that in case I am taking shower and the miscreants walk in, it will be embarrassing. *{The breakfast is here, consisting of a paatha and two kebabs and cup of tea, waiter has asked me, whether I should pour the tea, so let's have the breakfast first}*.

Good breakfast, very efficient mess, otherday I pointed to the mess havildar that kitchen needs cleaning and today it was clean, especially the door had inches of dirt and grease, it is a dilemma all over the army. Coming back to Brigadier Aqeel he is from 28 Baluch {Jeidi's unit} very polite and courteous, he came to my room but I took him to the library, it speaks of his courtesy. I wanted to ask him about the 6th May incident but always was concerned that he may mind it, but today I listened from horse's mouth.

In his words, there are certain walls of medium height which are all over the area and especially in the south of Amin Piquet which cause irritant in terms of miscreants fire so he decided to demolish one of the wall and simultaneously near Isha almost ten miles east of the wall to plant mines to hinder the rocket firers on the fort. Thus on 6th May which was Sunday he alongwith the commanding officer of 36 Baluch went first to the demolishing site where the dozer was brought on a mover under protection, Sunday was a curfew in the area. Amin Piquet is by the way part of No.5 Wing at Boya at wing commander lieutenant colonel Muhammad Ali was also supposed to be there and he did arrive there later. The process of wall demolishing went as per the plan, they had also plan to search a house which was close by. By noon they went back to the old site where mines were being planted, they met the Engineer's party who had already completed the task thus they move back and stopped en-route at the stadium gate for a break that is when they learnt that Captain Suleman of 36 Baluch is hit during the search, thus they rushed to the spot; which was an orchard near the compound.

The compound was encircled by the company of 36 Baluch, company commander and 2IC of the regiment were there, the cordon party was approaching from the southern side and was making no progress and that was not visible to the brigade commander and commanding officer from their spot. The party fired few rockets also but it made little impact on the mud brick walls of the compound. Brigadier Aqeel also moved two tanks from the Amin Piquet which had gone there on the same day, it took half an hour for the pair of tanks to reach the spot and they also fired from the southern side but the rounds also made little impact on the mud wall but one round did hit the pillar and wall was partially breached. The first two rounds of tank went astray even at close range of two hundred yards, {25 Cavalry}. The tanks were scared of rocket launchers which were sporadically being fired.

Now another soldier of 36 Baluch was hit and was evacuated and then another but it was difficult to evacuate him from so close from the compound but it was done. Time now was mid-day and the intense fire was coming from all direction. At this time they called for the reinforcement and one more QRF came but it was hit by a rocket launcher, *all I saw was a fire ball at the southern side and then came to know that a truck has been hit by the rocket*, another QRF was called, later they breached the compound and captured three teen aged Uzbeks and one elder person was killed while making escape, another miscreant died with an explosion inside the compound but own casualties were also mounting. The time now was evening and curfew was lifted as per routine and with this it was heard that thousands of people were marching towards the concerned area {actually around hundred}. Commander and commanding officer now both left the area and moved to the Amin Piquet and enroute they saw stranded vehicles, one was hit on the tyres and other had an injured driver. The tanks were also moved back. The performance of tank crew was below par, they had no communication and furthermore had closed down the cupola and Brigadier Aqeel had to knock it open by throwing stones on it, the crew was hesitant in crossing the ditch or alga in front, they had fired all of their ammunition without causing any damage. Cobras were called but they remained at very high level and only one rocket hit the compound. They in the meanwhile had vanished from the scene because the support helicopter Bell 412 had gone to pick another casualty Brigadier Gull at some other sector, he had suffered heart stroke. Now the situation was that the both the brigade commander and commanding officer had gone back to the Amin Piquet and from there the young officers volunteer including Captain Changezi {he mentioned few more but I have forgotten the names} came down in APC to carry out the rescue. Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Ali was also not present at the post. That was the situation at night which they all spent in anticipation of an attack on the post.

Initially there were reports of fifteen missing which later came down to seven. Next day they all moved back, the curfew was imposed but later it was lifted to allow the locals to pick their dead ones.

This was the situation when I landed at the Miranshah.

I asked Brigadier Aqeel few more questions regarding the overall infantry tactics, and he said they have to be changed in the context of this conflict, few pairs, less crowding, maximum fire power and minimum use of soft vehicles. He highlighted that maximum casualties he had suffered occurred due to the use of the vehicles. He admitted that the Talibans are highly motivated and excellent marksman. I had heard the term of intense fire coming but always thought that there are some traces of fire coming but on that day I experienced it without having any clue that from where it is coming from. The standards of individual soldier training needs to be improved. Above all aviation needs to be streamlined, here I am sitting three miles away from the site of conflict and helicopters had to be requested through division, corps and then to aviation channel and finally to the pilots, it is

cumbersome. I fully agree with him on the aviation aspect because right now I am going through the chain of events that took place in the valley from 5th July onwards when Tochi Scouts were made under the operational control of army {7 Division} and this point about the aviation is repeated consistently.

23 October 2012

It is 2000 hours, sitting in the library and no reason to be depressed when in last three days over twenty people have died outside the fort including women and children and one inside the complex. I am not sure but firing can start any time because this is what the pattern is there since I had that cup of tea with Brigadier Aqeel. Should I go backwards from here or forward from that cup of tea, let me think. I better have a shower because in the morning the water was cold. It is difficult to explain how and why it all started, the two early shots which I heard on that day were in fact the sound of fire fired by a miscreant {Uzbek} and second later he exploded himself thus it was a suicide attempt. He had been walking behind a truck in front of the stadium post and as soon as the truck passed by he just walked towards the check post and before the incharge could say anything he fired two shots and killed him, but meanwhile another scout on the far side of the road fired a burst and killed him and then a mayhem was set in motion which lasted for over two hours, there was another person with this Uzbek and he was injured and all the efforts were to catch him. Colonel Wajahat the commandant rushed to the spot and so were the three officers I mentioned. Wajahat gave a cash prize of Rupees 50,000 to the two soldiers who saved the honour of Tochi Scouts.

Later in the evening when I went to the Tennis Courts he was sitting in office which was bit unusual, but I had a game with Brigadier Shahid and Colonel Akhtar. During the end of set one we heard the Cobras firing and we discontinued the game and walked and later climbed to the Iftikhar Post from where we had a good view of the city, curfew was imposed and soon tanks, recoilless rifles, machine guns and Cobras started firing on the Machis Post Area, for half an hour it lasted and then artillery started pounding the positions. I had never seen such a display of firepower, Cobras were impressive and lethal, air was filled with the rattling sound of multiple weapons, dust, smoke and clouds raising from where they were firing and where they were landing the rounds. I was mesmerised, it was getting dark, the mosques from city and within the fort were calling the Muslims for prayers, it was emotional to feel that on one hand the mosque is calling us to come onto the path of righteous and on other hand there was no break in the shelling. City was deserted only few dogs were roaming around without any concern of what all is going around. The sound of RR is terrible shrieking, tank fire is loud, artillery whistling and Cobra is sexy, when it fires the sky is rattled, one hears the sound after a pause, I could see the tank firing and then after some time the bang of its shell landing at the target area which was not visible. I am a weak man and as such with every fire my whole body trembles, my brain and all nerves strained. But one has to hide all this. One feels powerful in such environment when one is sure that no retaliation can come. In a sad mood I descended and walk back to mess, enroute I stopped at quarter guard to offer my sympathies to the troops for the loss of the jawan in the day, it was as if I had lost one of my friend whom I have not even met but such is the bond. At quarter guard I came to know that he was married and was living with family, it was even more disheartening, to picture how his wife and children whom he must have left probably in a good mood today promising to take them home on eid and all of a sudden he is no more there.

Later I had a shower and then thought of going to the Commandant's house for condolence, I am very weak and poor in this matter, I was feeling the genuine sadness creeping in me and wanted to sit with someone to take my burden off, I wanted to shed few tears but there was none and no place to do so. After some time I went to his place luckily he was not there thus I left a message and came back to mess, had dinner and went back to my room. All night the artillery pounded, I thought of the

people on the receiving end, the one who are living under the flight path of shells, one wrong calculation on part of observer and shell can land anywhere. I thought of my daughter but then I also thought of the crimes these people have committed against us, the many soldiers and scouts not to mention innocent people who have died because of them. Wars are all over the world are bad. Laying on my bed the thought that these people cannot retaliate the way we do with our artillery was comforting.

Next morning there was a brunch given by the 114 Brigade, I was not sure whether it will be held or not but it was there and I hurriedly got ready and joined it, it was there that Wajahat narrated me the whole episode, on breakfast table it seemed as if nothing had ever happened here.

On Sunday which was 21st October 2012, Brigadier Aqeel came to say last words of goodbye and I am moved by his gesture for the reason that seldom I have experienced such gestures from others. This is either a shortcoming of retiring as a major or a positive sign that at least I have never gone through such rituals. I do recall Major Aziz Niazi in 4 Squadron at Quetta who once myself and my wife were being posted out to the Gujranwala, on permanent course gave us a dinner at Musketers restaurant, commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Ansari had pend it till I complete the course and then I should come back here with family to be dined out. Another time my friend Lt Col Masood arranged a good dined out at 27 Squadron but at last minute my wife picked a row with me or vice versa and I had to attend it alone. Skardu was another embarrassment, Lt Col Ubaid had put me under a military trial for possession of weapons the reason was something else but that was the excuse and later when Mueen took over he simply took over the house in which I had left my luggage and I was in Rawalpindi, another embarrassment, similar was the condition at Aitcheson College. Thus I never had a proper end at any station, probably Gujranwala was one station but no it was not, I was undergoing the court of inquiry, at Peshawar I had been awarded severe reprimand before posting out in 1993; what else is left. Thus the kind of courtesy which I am watching, observing, undergoing here at Miranshah and especially in the hands of Tochi Scouts is extraordinary in every way.

Eid Day 27th October 2012

It is eid day and it is sunny and warm, Local had the eid yesterday which is another strange paradox of our cultural clash. In my opinion the local logically displays a greater use of common sense than the state organs in determining the days of eid. All our Muslim festivals are interlinked with the sighting of new moon and above all it is in direct relation with the what is happening in Saudi Arabia, now that country is in terms of Greenwich time standards only three and half hours behind us, in terms of distance only 1000 miles away on our west, in terms of flying time it takes three hours to reach there. Today is 27th of October here in Pakistan and time is 1100 hours local or 0600 hours GMT, in Saudi Arabia it is the same date but time there is 0800 hours local, thus how can we have a festival a day later. Above all how on earth we can say that the moon which was sighted at Saudi Arabia last night was not sighted here. The local of tribal agency still maintain one day gap but the state of Pakistan maintains two days gap. Thus eid was in Saudi Arabia on 25th, locals had it on 26th and state is having it on 27th, strange and weird.

Yesterday I went to the tennis court and Israr who is a local Daur surprisingly acme to the tennis court, wearing new clothes, he was celebrating eid, since there was none in the court except the ball pickers thus I had a good chat with him, I inquired about he and other locals celebrate eid. Israr told me that he and his two other brothers purchased sacrificial animals for 60,000 Rupees which includes one lamb and one cow. The eid is simple in the city and in the tribal villages, they sacrificed but all cannot do it because of financial limitations, but they in fact reared the sacrificial animal for a year. I remember the JCO I met at Butt Marka Post who had two lambs whom he was looking after

for last four months. Thus in true sense they carry out this important ritual. The main and central eid prayers are held in the city; since it was Friday yesterday thus I also heard the sermon in Pashtu. There were few shops opened in the city as per Israr, people carry out sacrifice and then distribute the meat and also keep the rest with them, in winter it is possible but in summer it is difficult due to heat and lack of electricity.

Here within the Fort, I in any case woke up late and missed the prayers, now they have a lunch at JCO mess at 1200 hours where I am also invited. In the mess only myself, adjutant Captain Bilal and one air force officer Zia are present, rest all Ali the doctor, Saad and commandant all have gone on leave.

I am alone but then it is my own choosing, flash back of previous eids are coming, we never had a sacrifice because it was difficult to purchase the animal not financially but more of laziness, then to look after it and above all to sacrifice it. Even in Skardu where there was ample open space I had a lamb for some time but before eid I gave to a poor to do whatever he wants to do with it. It is a difficult task and in this is the real beauty of the ritual to be able to sacrifice your precious thing in the name of your creator.

Brigadier Shahid of artillery had warned about the incoming shelling from locals on the eid night but luckily his prophecy has not been true. Major General Abid Rafique came for a visit to Miranshah, stayed night in Tochi Mess, I met him for half an hour presented him with the book and had a cup of tea. In the discussion I think he is not very clear about about the Tochi Valley but then almost majority are not, they all tends to relate this valley with the other like Swat but that is different even south Waziristan is different. Meeting old course mates is a pleasure, we were together in the SSG basic course, he is right to mention that time has passed. The other course mate Ali Abbas has shifted to the new complex at division; he had an operation of his knee and as such is restricted in his movement. As long as he was my neighbour or vice versa it was good to have a chat with him and not to forget his fridge, his laptop is still with me and I am having second thoughts whether I should keep for another week or hand over him today, he does not really need it but on the other hand I also don't feel very good in keeping it when he is in garrison.

On national level the prices of CNG have been drastically reduced and now I am having second thoughts about having a diesel Mercedes, it is expensive to maintain when you are jobless.

I had Bara Khana at the JCO's Mess of Tochi Scouts, nice of them that they invitrd me, mess is good nothing extraordinary about it, a borad of instructions few paintaings but importantly the pictures of all corps subeadr majors, now I know the history behind every pictureand corected that Subedtr Major Malanag Shah was awarded with a medal also which was not indicated, my friendship now I smore wih Naib Subear Fazal Orakzai, I also like Subeadr Khattak Qaum commander, Sharbat Khan was on leave. Food was also ordinary in atste but we took it while sitting in dastar khawan style thi sis the major difference bewteen army and FC style, apples were too big in size, I mixed the salty nad sweet rice together which was novelty for some but to others it was a sign of ole army, JCO's had the food with spoon and fork, officers sat on one side and JCO's on other , I wanted to sit among them but then followed the customs of the corps.

After the food we all {Tariq, Rab Nawaz and myself} went to call on GOC Ali Abbass, Rab Nawaz insisted on my sittting in front of the vehicle, I really have to insist on their adhering to seniority, as a retired officer I am not entitled to any protocol but these officers insist ion following it, nice of them. The hard fact is that they got commissioned in 1992 or later and I was already a major

by that time. GOC was having food thus we had to wait outside, I could have gone inside as a course mate but I stick with my Tochi Colleagues, after fifteen minutes we went inside and left after fifteen minutes.

I later had two calls one to my mother and other to my father and also to Lieutenant Colonel Ahsan Janjua who is a very nice and fine person and also to Jawad but his phone went unanswered, I again call him at night but same answer, lets hope he is ok. Later I worked in library and saw Brigadier Khalil Dar along with Colonel Nasir {both aviators}. Khalil is the first officer to read my book Air Observation Post and he liked it, we sat for some time then I left him to be with his juniors, later he came to see the library, he is the only one who has shown any interest in purchase of the book for the base.

Later at night had a wonderful barbeque at Lieutenant Colonel Tariq Shinwari's home, excellent food, specially the Patka Tikka, it was lamb meat. Meat wrapped around the fat of the lamb. Later at night went to bed early thinking about my children and wife.

28th October 2012.

Sitting in library, trying to make out the peace process that took place in the agency in 2006. From January 2006 onwards the attacks on military increased drastically with disastrous results for the military and simultaneously peace talks also started in which army initially was stubborn but later gave way in September 2006 by which the writ of Taliban was established along with army.

Full Moon 30th October 2012

The full moon ordeal is going on, there is a controversy or debate among all of us and with 'all of us' I mean Brigadier Raza, Brigadier Shahid and myself, Colonel Wajahat would have been part of it but he is on leave.

Now see, the eid was on 10th of Zil Huj which in any case means it is 10th of moon, it was celebrated as such on 25th In Saudi Arabia, the natives celebrated eid on 26th of October which was 11th of moon and we celebrated it on 27th October which makes it 12th of moon thus 29th of October should have been full moon but other insisted on it being full on 30th. Now Brigadier Raza is good in giving calculations that moon rises at such and such time and so on,; thus I agreed because in any case there is no logic in having discussion with an officer who is a brigadier and further more he had agreed to do photography for you.

Brigadier Raza has a good camera Nikon and I have seen some of his pictures thus I requested him to take few shots for me as well of full moon and he agreed. Thus on 29th October after the tennis game in which I am partner with Shahid and Raza and Major Nayyar of artillery are partners. My game is fair and I can give company to any one. We both moved to Mess and sat in the lawn, it was cold and moon was up but it was not coming into the right angle thus we had to wait for almost two hours sitting in the lawn waiting for it to reach the desired elevation. Again on 30th October we took few more shots at 1907 hours and Raza was able to capture the required shots.

Later at night I stared at the moon for some time as I have many memories with it, who knows when will I be able to see the moon full again.

31st October 2012

Much ado nothing fits on me perfectly, the electricity is gone for last three days as Bakka Khel tribe have put iron ropes around it in their area. It is only the generator which is working but it has timings, it works or operates from 0900-1200 hours and then at night from 1900-2300 hours thus I have to finish my work and also the dinner by this time, in the morning it is only giving power to the office area thus I have to go thereto charge my computer and once gone thee means that no work can be performed other than verbal and cups of tea after tea.

In the evening at 1500 hours I go to Tennis court and comes back at 1730 hour so little time left for writing but whatever time is there I am making full use of it.

I ma now covering the year 2007 which was the worst in terms of violence in the agency, especially the months of July.

9th December 2012. Bannu Serai ,

1810 hours. It is the end game, I am on way back to real world which I am not wiling to do happily but this is the limitation of our age that we cannot even live in real world. I am wrong in stating that because I have read that a German by the name of Breinner was part of Taliban, think he was still under thirty, a man who wanted to be another Che Guerra, a man from Europe comes here , lives among Taliban, those very same people about whom i know so little. It is not a question of hating him rather it is an issue of how can men live the life he likes. Best life is where there is a thrill, one can give an argument that thrill is in cricket also , I agree with him that every new fast ball is a potent threat , thus sports is one way of living as close to real world as possible. I know that next thing which comes to mind in terms of thrill is military life where every moment is a last moment; in some cases if not in majority of the cases.

We define thrilling life as a complete life not where one is living for brief period, moment or even decade. This is the limitation of military life. It does have an end, it have momentary periods of thrill then breaks of studies, leaves, courses and so on , same holds true for cricket or any other sports. I am of the opinion that greatest thrill that man ever had been when it steps down for the first time on moon. It was again the biggest but certainly had its own life had its own life time. This is not the case here in North Waziristan Agency, thrills starts with your birth itself. From your early days you are part of a feud, your life can settle a feud which is an obligation, age is not a criterion neither any question of morality is involved in it. It finishes with your death whenever it comes, at the age of eighty you are still part of the feud, your age is no excuse for your getting away from arena. In 2009 there were two brothers who came back to North Waziristan after lapse of almost five years from abroad and they had their thrill I think on the second last day of their leave when they came ina cross fire. However these things one can enjoy even at Karachi which is no different from North Waziristan Agency in this regard. Karachi fits in ideally in this scenario of thrill but comparing to NWA it is still galaxies away.

I awoke up this morning because I had to come back to Bannu onwards to Peshawar-Rawalpindi- Gujranwala- Lahore and in between mother, father, book composer, my faculty, friends, my car, high cost of gasoline, loneliness, memories, loves and hates and so on. Certainly not a welcome thought but book has to be printed nad for this I have to come. I would have gone last week

also but then Wajahat had the idea of myself having a meeting with IGFC Major General Ghayour, not a bad idea and I in any case needed this last week to polish the draft. It was good, Ghayour is typical Pathan general having lot of stories, other wise he still looks like a boy. Then two days back two Tochi Scouts walked away from Bangidar towards the Zero point to fetch some items without even bothering to carry weapons, they were abducted and this was an anti climax. In the morning Afsar Khan waiter when I asked about commandant told me that last night the dead body of one has been received and his funeral prayers are at 0900 hours. This havildar was Turi a Shia and our biggest fear in last two days was that he will not be spared merely due to this fact that he is Shia. Other's after is still unknown so far.

With this back ground I left Tochi with heavy heart, had fare well hand shake with all because they were sitting in the mess lawn, commandant, wing commanders Tariq & Rab Nawaz, Major Zamir, Brigadier Waseem and colonel staff . Fear of IED is another factor, because of violation of SOPs the Bangidar incident had taken place also so much study of the last seven years made you wise where nothing can be taken as granted. I was given a jeep in which I had painter Laiq, scout Yasin and another driver. Chashmai bridge, Sarbankai Post, Isha, Gosh, Hassu Khel, Kamar, Idak, Naurak, MirAli, and sorry we had a halt at Naurak . All of a sudden the convoy halted at a climb, leading vehicle halted and all braked within feet of each other. Captain got down, he looked smart in his jungle hat but that is not what is required here, here it is helmet. Meanwhile almost all drivers jumped down from their vehicles as if they are driving civil vehicles, few ran forward all without weapons. One odd had a weapon but it was not in combat style or as per teaching. Military Police soldier also moved ahead, he was also without weapon. My own scout switched off the vehicle and after few moment got down he was also without weapon.

In the morning when we left Mess in this jeep the very first question I asked was whether you are having any weapon and he sheepishly said no, I kept quite, we stopped in front of lines and I saw two trucks of scouts in front with troops sitting, now after such interaction it looked odd that I should travel alone in tis jeep so I indicated one to join us and two joined; one of them was Laiq whom I have only seen in civil dress painting on walls so it took some time to recognise that he is the same one. I was more comfortable because these two had rifles with them and I inquired about the number of rounds they were carrying sixty each. Now you can understand my anxiety when the convoy halted and all drills and procedures which I have been reading in last two months porously were in front of me being violated as if they never existed. No convoy distance, none got out to take all round protection and troops were sitting as if nothing will happen. In my mind 2007 ambush was going on, it again took place in 2008,2009,2010 and even in 2011. My eyes were scanning the growth on my left and on my right also. At one o' clock position a high mound with even a more formidable castle stood, on my left a green patch with bushes separated the house all within a RPG-7 strike range. Few boys playing but who now vanished then I some men, my ears were now listening and picking up whistles, yet life was moving around me. One vehicle had a tyre puncture and it was not carrying the spare tyre. I narrated history to others scouts about how things go wrong, I indirectly warned them to be mentally ready for anything. After ten minutes we all moved forward.

After MirAli our own tyre bursted, I felt it during the turn, it was good that driver was driving slow otherwise the consequences would have been different. I told Laiq to get his weapon ready , he willingly took my suggestion. I saw few khassadars catching fish in the algal. I walked towards the Double Bridge and starting taking photographs , meanwhile they change the tyre. We did not had any water and I curse myself for overlooking such fundamental issue. Area is green and wide. Only two weeks age a tank was hit with an IED near Mirali resultantly two soldiers from 29 Cavalry died. You cannot find an IED here, when we left MiranShah and even before Chashami there is a wood selling

place with heaps of wood for winter warmth on sale, how can you find a IED among this stack of wood spread over so wide area.